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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
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TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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Monday 25 April 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Cefn Coed Hospital (Forensic Unit)

1. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made on the establishment of a medium secure forensic unit at Cefn Coed hospital, Swansea; and whether he expects it to open on target in 1990.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The Department's initial suggestion that the medium secure psychiatric unit for south-west Wales might be located at Cefn Coed hospital is being reviewed in consultation with the health authorities most concerned. When all the responses have been received and considered a final decision will be made.

Mr. Wardell: The Minister will know that the Welsh Office had agreed that the three units would be located at Cefn Coed hospital, Swansea, Bridgend and Cardiff. Why will the 750,000 people residing in south Wales presumably now be denied the response that the unit can go ahead in 1990? Is it not time that such a Cinderella service was not accepted by the Government, and that the unit was set up urgently at Cefn Coed?

Mr. Grist: It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman does not accept that the programme was long overdue and that the Government should take credit for putting it in action at all. The fact that there is disagreement over the positioning at Cefn Coed was mentioned at the time of the original announcement. It is on medical and social grounds that the discussions have been taking place. We have had our report from West Glamorgan health authority and we expect the reports from the other two health authorities very shortly.

Factory Units

2. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many factory units have been built by the Welsh Development Agency since its inception.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): Since its inception the agency has built 1,466 factory units. That figure does not include the 186 factories purchased from Cwbran development corporation.

Mr. Knox: How many factory units have been built each year, on average, since the present Government came into power, and how does that compare with the figure under the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Walker: As a rough approximation, under the present Government the annual rate has been more than double that under the Labour Government.

Mr. Foot: I welcome the increase in the number of factories that have been coming into Gwent, for example, over recent months, and I see that the Secretary of State has been eager to give some publicity to that event. Will he take account of the fact that the increase in applications is partly because many of the industrialists think that the terms that they are being offered now are better than those that they will get later? Will the Secretary of State give an absolute guarantee that if after an interval of, say, three months—I am sure that that will be long enough—he finds that the figure is not being sustained, he will revert to the present system?

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that in terms of factory applications and factory building by the WDA, the programme for the next three years, including in his constituency, shows a substantial increase.

Mr. Raffan: While there has been a warm welcome in north Wales for the massive increase in the WDA property programme, made possible by the Government, will my right hon. Friend take note of the need for a better balance in the number of factories between south-east Clwyd and north-east and coastal Clwyd? South-east Clwyd seems to be benefiting far more than the north-east and coastal parts of the county.

Mr. Walker: I can only say that I am anxious that factories should be built and workshops provided wherever the need is. The WDA is endeavouring to do that throughout the Principality.

British Coal

3. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met the deputy chairman of British Coal on 21 January. We discussed a range of issues relating to the south Wales coal industry. I also had talks with the chairman on 19 March.

Mr. Griffiths: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of British Coal, will he raise with him the callous disregard that British Coal is showing for five householders on the edge of the Margam deep mine site? Because British Coal continually denies that it is going ahead with that proposal, those householders' homes have been blighted and one householder has had to refuse a 90 per cent. grant because British Coal has refused to pay for the house once it has been improved, if it finally decides to go ahead with the mine.

Mr. Walker: I shall be happy to convey to the chairman the detailed problems that the hon. Gentleman relates. I can only say that I hope there will be a quick decision on whether Margam is to go ahead.

Sir Anthony Meyer: As my right hon. Friend is aware, whether the mine at Margam goes ahead depends very much on the attitude of the National Union of Mineworkers in south Wales. Has he heard anything from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about whether the Labour party is encouraging the NUM to agree to the proposal?

Mr. Walker: Since the challenge by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in the recent debate there has not been a word from the Labour party about its attitude towards Margam. I hope that there will be.

Mr. Livsey: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of British Coal, will he ensure that there is a proper balance between opencast mining and deep mining in south Wales? Will he also ensure that British Coal does not have plans to work deep-mine sites by opencast workings, thereby blighting the communities in the areas concerned?

Mr. Walker: All applications for opencast mining must be accompanied by proper planning procedures, and I am sure that that practice will be followed.

Mr. Barry Jones: When does the Secretary of State believe that the result of the public inquiry into opencast mining at Cheapside in my constituency will be made known? Is he aware of the widespread opposition to the proposal, and does he know that people in east Clwyd fear that they are to be subject to the increasing intentions and activities of the Opencast Executive? Will he examine these matters?

Mr. Walker: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman when I can find any sign of when the decision will be made.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Secretary of State realise that the Margam project is being dangled before the people of Wales as if it were a puppet on a string? Is this not in line with the right hon. Gentleman's record as Secretary of State for Energy from 11 June 1983 to 12 June 1987, when he closed no fewer than 17 pits with a loss of 12,287 jobs—55 per cent. of the work force? In the past week south Wales has been reduced to a peripheral area. Does it mean that in taking up the position of Secretary of State for Wales the right hon. Gentleman has been appointed to finish the job of closing a great traditional Welsh industry?

Mr. Walker: As Secretary of State for Energy, I did not close anywhere near as many mines in South Wales as the number closed by the previous Labour Government. If the hon. Gentleman measures performance by the closure of mines, the Labour Government had a terrific triumph. Once more there has been an opportunity for the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench to give their enthusiastic support for Margam. May we please have a word from them? Are they in favour of Margam, or are they not?

Hospital Waiting Lists

4. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest hospital in-patient waiting list figures for *(a)* urgent and *(b)* non-urgent patients for (i) Clwyd and (ii) Wales.

Mr. Grist: The number of people waiting for urgent in-patient treatment in Clwyd at 30 September 1987 was 383 and in Wales 3,596. The numbers waiting for non-urgent in-patient treatment were 4,491 and 36,262 respectively.

Dr. Marek: The Minister will no doubt remember his bungled pledge that by the spring no one in Wales should have to wait for more than one month for an urgent operation and not more than one year for a non-urgent operation? Will he renew the promise?

Mr. Grist: Certainly that remains our target. It is being achieved. Opposition Members might like to learn that of 225 major in-patient lists in Wales, 85 per cent. are meeting the target waiting time of one month for urgent in-patient treatment and 73 per cent. are meeting the target waiting time of one year for non-urgent treatment.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is it not almost inevitable that with further advances in medical science new operations will become possible; and that the categories of urgent and non-urgent will become completely different?

Mr. Grist: I cannot gainsay what my hon. Friend has said. Practice changes as improvements are made, and

patients do not necessarily have to stay in hospital for the periods that applied in the past, or at all, and unfortunately the cost of the various drugs and items of equipment continues to increase.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister give his response to the criticisms that have been made by doctors who took part in the perinatal mortality initiative that was set up by the Secretary of State's predecessor in 1985? Nothing has been done to execute the recommendations that followed the initiative—22 months after they were submitted to the Welsh Office. It was reported in the *Western Mail* last week that Dr. Sandy Cavanagh, who was a member of the initiative, said that he found the delay of 22 months both amazing and actionable. What is the Minister's response to these comments?

Mr. Grist: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question has much to do with Clwyd or waiting lists. I can tell him that perinatal mortality figures in Wales have been reduced from above those for England to below those for England during this Government's term of office.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have had messages of appreciation from constituents who have benefited from the Welsh Office's extra spending to reduce waiting lists, which resulted in South Glamorgan buying in heart operations from outside hospitals? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that enough is being done to achieve the Welsh Office's target of an increased number of heart operations?

Mr. Grist: Yes. Of course, my hon. Friend will be aware that we are waiting for a final report from the Royal College of Physicians on cardiac provision in south Wales.

Mr. Alan Williams: Has the Minister seen the recent report that, with 41 million days sickness recorded, Wales has the highest sickness rates in the whole of Britain—three times as high as the rate in England? Does he consider that at least one result—I do not say that it will be the sole or major result—will be longer waiting lists? Wales has a lower proportion of hospital beds than even Northern Ireland and Scotland. As a DHSS spokesman has said that he has no theory to explain the higher Welsh figures, and in view of the importance of the figures, will the Welsh Office take an initiative and establish an urgent top-level inquiry to determine what special factors are at work in Wales?

Mr. Grist: The major step that the Welsh Office would claim to have taken in the recent past is the establishment of the Welsh Health Promotion Authority. Unfortunately, our lifestyle in Wales contributes to the sorts of death rates and some of the diseases from which we suffer rather too much.

Rating Reform

5. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the financing of community councils in Wales after the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received several representations from and on behalf of community councils.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that councils, which are the elected bodies closest to the electorate, have a valuable role to fulfil, provided that they stick to the job for which they were elected? Does he agree that, in view of the changeover to the community charge, there is anxiety about the future of their financing arrangements?

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. They are the local councils. They will be absolutely free to continue the role that they are currently undertaking, which is the provision of services for people in their localities. We expect that they will continue to do so, and that they will have no trouble in carrying out that task.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister agree that 60 per cent. of the finance of community councils in my constituency comes from non-domestic rates? Does he agree also that, to help community councils in Wales, which he applauds —we all agree with him—it is necessary for them to have not only grant but part of the non-domestic rate income?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman is following up a mistake that I thought had been corrected in Committee and in a letter to him on the difference between Wales and England in that respect. It is worth pointing out that community council spending per head of adult population in Wales is only £3·50. Of course, in many areas there is no community spending at all. At present levels, most community council charges would be under £10.

Welsh Language

6. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to be able to announce a decision on his plans for new Welsh language legislation; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): My right hon. Friend and I are now considering measures to promote and protect the Welsh language, details of which will be announced shortly.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister tell the House why, following their consultation, which concluded on 31 March 1987, on the draft Bill that was proposed by Lord Prys-Davies in another place, and by myself here, the Government have still not published the detailed representations that they received? They have not even shown the balance of opinion in favour or against the new legislation. As they have held the consultations, is it not high time that the results of those consultations were made public?

Mr. Roberts: We have made known the results of that consultation. They were inconclusive, as the hon. Gentleman knows. That is why my right hon. Friend set up a group under my chairmanship. It has met three times and has given constructive thought to the problem. My right hon. Friend has also met representatives of various Welsh language bodies. We shall publish the representations that were made during the consultation. We shall certainly make them available after we have finished working with them.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Those of us who support the view that the Welsh language and culture should be encouraged in every way are worried about the

law-breaking activities of some members of the Welsh Language Society. Does my hon. Friend agree that they do nothing to help the advancement of Welsh in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: Law-breaking activities by members of the Welsh Language Society, or any other body, are counter-productive., Law-breaking activities only create antipathy and diminish the goodwill that exists in Wales towards the language.

Mr. Heffer: As somebody who studied the Welsh language during the evening at the Liverpool university extra-mural classes and as a member of the Welsh Labour History Society, may I ask the hon. Gentleman what efforts are being made to encourage the study of the Welsh language in the rest of the United Kingdom, particularly in England?

Mr. Roberts: We certainly encourage people from England to visit Wales. We extend a warm croeso to them when they visit Wales. It is a fact that among the most ardent Welsh learners these days are people from England who have come to settle in Wales.

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend tell me whether among the proposals that he is considering there is a suggestion that parents should have a statutory right to have their children educated through the medium of Welsh, should they so choose?

Mr. Roberts: I am not prepared to comment on the details of the proposals that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are considering. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of the new place given to the Welsh language in the national curriculum and of the steps that we are taking by the establishment of a Welsh language subject group. We announced the name of the chairman last week and we shall be announcing the membership shortly. There will also be a curriculum council for Wales. Welsh will be a foundation subject, which means that it will be available to all children in all parts of Wales, except where my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State grants an exception.

Mr. Flynn: The survival of the Welsh language is a continuing miracle. It is a great treasure that we all hold in trust. It is also the most dangerously divisive and explosive issue in Wales. The window of opportunity for legislation is now wide open. This year, for the first time this century, the National Eisteddfod is coming to the most Anglicised part of Wales—Newport. This would have been inconceivable 21 years ago, which was the last time that the House legislated on the language. We must now seize the opportunity which is provided by the evidence of goodwill towards the language from all parties and areas of Wales. Will the Minister assure us that the Government will not delay until they are pressured into action, as they were on the fourth channel? They should build now on the burgeoning, but perhaps fragile, goodwill towards the language by acting swiftly to secure the health and survival of yr hen iqith.

Mr. Roberts: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Opposition Front Bench, and I welcome also his tour de force in favour of the Welsh language. He referred to legislation and, of course, it is easy to cry for a Welsh language Act. It is not so easy to say what might or should go into it. As the hon. Gentleman appears to be committing the Labour party to legislating—I hasten to add that there is no commitment on the Government side—perhaps he will let us know what the content of any Bill might be.

Personal Debt

7. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he intends to take to tackle the problem of personal debt in Wales and to ensure that adequate services of money management, advice and debt counselling are available to families and individuals in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry recently made clear to the hon. Gentleman, a great deal of advice and help on debt problems are already provided free of charge by citizens advice bureaux and other organisations. Funding from my Department is provided under the urban programme to a number of organisations of this kind.

Mr. Michael: Will the Secretary of State accept that the question that he has not answered is what steps he intends to take to tackle the problem, in view of the greater intensity that will hit us as a result of the Government's legislation on social security? Will he accept that the replies to similar questions that have been given by the Secretary of State for Social Services and by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has a responsibility for trade and industry, have been woefully light and inadequate? The only remaining possibility of help for people in Wales on this desperately serious problem is for the Secretary of State to take some positive action. Will he answer more affirmatively about what he will do on this matter?

Mr. Walker: As I mentioned, one of the main sources of advice are the citizens advice bureaux. I am delighted that Government funding of those organisations has more than quadrupled during the period that we have been in power.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the Secretary of State support the advice of his other Ministers that elderly people in communities such as mine should go further into debt either to pay for their hip operations or to cover the losses in benefit and rate rebate that the Government are now imposing?

Mr. Walker: I do not believe that any such advice was given.

Mr. Alan Williams: Is the Secretary of State proud to be a loyal, long-serving, unprotesting member of a Cabinet which, to save £13 million in Wales, has told the poorest people in our second poorest region that they must go without necessities, take loans from the Department of Health and Social Security, beg from charities or throw themselves on the mercy of loans sharks? Will he give his view on a piece of advice that was given? Does he echo the Prime Minister's advice to a 73-year-old Welsh woman that she should take out a bank loan?

Mr. Walker: I am delighted to support a Government who, unlike the Government of whom the right hon. Gentleman was a junior Minister, are spending 42 per cent. more in real terms on the National Health Service and doing far more for education and for pensioners. I find the right hon. Gentleman's hypocrisy staggering.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the Secretary of State to withdraw the word "hypocrisy" which he levelled against the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Walker: I withdraw the word "hypocrisy" and substitute "surprising".

Gwynedd Health Authority

8. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of Gwynedd health authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of Gwynedd health authority on 8 March this year. The authority's financial position and the formula used in determining resource allocations in Wales were discussed.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister has suggested that the meeting did take place. Is he aware that today that health authority is due to come to a crucial decision about the future of hospital services in five hospitals in the county of Gwynedd, one of which directly affects the Nant Conwy area, my own constituency and that of his hon. Friend the Minister of State? Will the Minister tell the House whether, when the decision is taken by the health authority, the Welsh Office will ensure that the views of the local population, strongly expressed during the consultation process against any reduction in hospital services, will be considered fully by the Government? I appreciate that the Minister cannot state that he will oppose these closure proposals, but if he can say that those views will be taken into account, that will be appreciated by the communities affected.

Mr. Grist: I can certainly assure the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members that if there is disagreement on any decision made by the health authority on the programme that it is facing it will, of course, come to the Welsh Office for one month, during which time we shall be open to any representations.

Rogerstone Power Station

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the likely effect on jobs and the environment of the reopening of Rogerstone power station.

Mr. Peter Walker: I understand that negotiations between the Central Electricity Generating Board and a private power company are at an advanced stage. Employment at the power station will be a matter for the prospective purchaser, who will, of course, also have to adhere strictly to the environmental regulations and controls that apply to power stations.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Secretary of State aware that hundreds of fine local homes are now in the front line for pollution from gases, carcinogens, wind-blown dust and 24-hour noise? Does he not agree that reopening Rogerstone could destroy more jobs than it creates and blight the Newport jobs build-up? New high-tech jobs are coming to Newport in great numbers because it is a good place to work and live. High-tech firms do not sit comfortably as neighbours with mucky, old, heavy industry. Will the Secretary of State promise to bring his influence to bear to stop the reopening of Rogerstone, which could be a planning atrocity and an act of industrial vandalism, the like of which we have not seen for decades?

Mr. Walker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's remarks will not be taken as an attack on coal-fired power stations, because if they are the National Union of Mineworkers will be interested in his observations. Of course, any power station would have to adhere strictly to the environmental regulations and controls that apply to all power stations. Most of the power stations in this country are coal-fired and I am surprised at the sort of attack that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Would my right hon. Friend use the word he used earlier to describe as surprising one of his Front-Bench colleagues if he were to come forward with a policy of attacking job opportunities in his constituency? Is that appropriate for a Front Bench spokesman? Should we not approach all job opportunity proposals positively, in the interests of further reviving the economy of Wales?

Mr. Walker: All job opportunities must be considered in terms of their total impact. Obviously, for a power station, environmental regulations and controls are of considerable importance, and they will be imposed.

Home Improvement Loans

10. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for Welsh housing of the proposed removal of tax relief on house improvement loans.

Mr. Grist: A married man on average earnings will be paying nearly £5 less per week in income tax as a result of the changes announced in the Budget. This will more than offset the tax relief attracted by the average home improvement loan in Wales. I do not believe that the removal of this support will have a significant impact on repair and renovation.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Minister not ashamed that there are now a record 20,000 homeless families in Wales, that the housing conditions in the Cynon Valley are among the worst in the United Kingdom and that the removal of tax relief is regarded by all building societies as a major disincentive to people wishing to improve their homes? What evidence has he that there is widespread abuse, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer alleged in his Budget speech, and that home improvement loans are being used in Wales to buy cars and second holidays?

Mr. Grist: I was not aware that the hon. Lady thought that there was any great difference between Wales and England in these matters, but if she has any evidence of that, obviously we shall be interested to see it. She mentioned a whole raft of matters in her statement. It is interesting to note that the Cynon Valley home improvement agency is being established rather late in the day by her council with a considerable degree of help from the Welsh Office, which has been molly-coddling and helping her council for some time, as she knows.

Mr. Anderson: Is it not astonishing of the Minister to assert in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) that there is no difference in this matter between Wales and England? He quoted the average earnings for the United Kingdom. Our earnings

are substantially lower. He, more than anyone else, should be aware of the quality of Welsh housing compared with English housing and, therefore, of our greater need. Was that not an astonishingly complacent and ignorant reply?

Mr. Grist: The whole reason why the Government have quadrupled the amount of home improvement in Wales is that we recognised those faults, which, apparently, were overlooked by the Labour party.

Hospital Beds

11. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital beds there were in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd in May 1979; and what is the current number.

Mr. Grist: The average daily number of beds available in 1979 was 3,052 in Clwyd and 23,456 in Wales. The number available in 1986 was 2,769 and 21,686 respectively. The numbers of patients treated, however, was 47,741 in Clwyd and 349,695 in Wales in 1979, compared with 57,519 in Clwyd and 433,870 in Wales in 1986.

Mr. Jones: Will the Minister ensure ugent and decisive action regarding the need of patients in Clwyd to journey to England for radiotherapy and other cancer treatments? Does he understand the distress and worry for families as well as patients who must undertake these journeys? May I tell him of an elderly constituent who finds the journey costly and distressing, and who would like to be treated in his native Deeside? Will the Minister take urgent action?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Welsh Office is indeed looking into the whole provision of cancer treatment in north Wales, for the reasons that he mentioned. We are aware of them.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister explain how, in making a speech in Builth Wells in my constituency last Friday, he said that the National Health Service did not require any more public funding, when in the same week Powys health authority announced the closure of 26 beds in St. David's hospital? Has that something to do with the formula associated with the number of private beds?

Mr. Grist: I think that it is worth pointing out that Powys health authority in-patient throughputs, both urgent and non-urgent, meet Welsh Office targets. That is a matter for congratulations. What I said was that it was not necessary to throw more money around to achieve better efficiency. We must get more efficiency out of the money that we already spend.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that hospitals throughout Wales will be greatly helped by the most generous increase in nurses' pay that was announced last week? That increase contrasts with a cut in the real take-home pay of nurses under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Grist: Indeed. The pay award means that expenditure in real terms on the Health Service in Wales under this Government has increased by more than 42 per cent. Nurses were not the only people to suffer under the previous Labour Government. Administrators, clerical grades, doctors and dentists also suffered cuts in real pay.

Health Authorities

12. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the Welsh health authorities; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will be meeting the Welsh health authorities' chairmen's committee on 14 June. An agenda for our meeting has not yet been fixed.

Mr. Jones: The Secretary of State will be aware that the Government have stated, time and time again, that they are committed to the principle of community care, but they have never made the resources available to match that commitment. When the Secretary of State next meets the chairmen of the Welsh health authorities, will he discuss with them the implications of the Griffiths report in England, which calls for greater partnership between social services dept and health authorities?

Mr. Walker: We have been discussing community service health board chairmen, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: When the Secretary of State meets the chairmen of the health athorities, will he raise with them the problems of the delays in cervical smear testing and the reporting of the results? I have received a letter from a nurse in Whitland in my constituency. She expresses the concern and anxiety of many people at the three-month delay at the local hospital between carrying out the tests and reporting the results. The nurse points out that that delay can be the difference between life and death.

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman would care to send me the correspondence that he has had from the nurse, I shall certainly look into the matter.

Mr. Raffan: Although I warmly welcome the nurses' pay rise and the Government's decision to fund it in full, will my right hon. Friend consider the position of medical laboratory scientific officers, whose pay increased by 5·6 per cent. less than the rate of inflation between 1 April 1979 and 1 April 1986? Will the Government reconsider the possibility of including them in the pay review body?

Mr. Walker: Nurses were specifically included in the pay review body primarily because of their agreement that they would not be involved in strike action. I am pleased to say that as a result of that, and the actions of the review body, a staff nurse today is receiving 110 per cent. more in salary than when we came into office.

Forestry

13. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what acreage of land he proposes to approve for afforestation during the current year.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is no fixed programme of new planting in Wales. The level of planting will depend on a number of factors.

Mr. Davies: Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that Wales is making more than its fair contribution to British forestry policy? Will he confirm that there are some 10,000 hectares of land that have been cleared for afforestation in Wales, but have not yet been planted? In

the light of those figures, how can he possibly justify refusing to extend to the areas of high environmental value in the uplands of Wales the same measure of protection as his counterpart in England has given to the English uplands?

Mr. Walker: It is not a question of the same measure of protection. In reality there is a considerable difference. There is little conifer planting in England, and it is a different scene from Wales. A number of hon. Members are aware of the requirements of the substantial paper industry in Wales and of the importance of ensuring that a future supply of conifers in Wales. Every decision will be taken after fully considering the environmental interest.

Mr. Chapman: I recognise my right hon. Friend's great interest in arboricultural matters. Will he confirm that there is a need in the Principality, as there is in England, for sensible lowland broadleaved woodland planting schemes as well as the coniferous upland afforestation?

Mr. Walker: I welcome the new grants that have been provided, as I believe that they will provide a number of opportunities in the lowland areas of Wales for better planting of broadleaved trees.

Dr. Thomas: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is an inherent conflict in his role as national parks and agriculture Minister and that of forestry Minister? Therefore, does he accept that it is high time that afforestation in the national parks were subject to planning consent in the normal way?

Mr. Walker: I am well aware of the environmental and forestry considerations in the balance that I must strike. I know of no great criticisms. We wish to retain the beauty of the national parks and to have a successful forestry and paper industry in Wales. I think that both can be achieved.

Rail Services

14. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions he has met the chairman of British Rail to discuss the future of rail services in the Principality.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met Sir Robert Reid on 5 February 1988.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Secretary of State agree that major issues such as the Channel tunnel and electrification of the south Wales line are not just operational matters for British Rail but could have major implications for Wales? Will he intervene with British Rail, first, to ensure that the opportunities presented by the Channel tunnel are fully grasped and, secondly, to press for the electrification of the south Wales line?

Mr. Walker: Sir Robert Reid is enthusiastic about the prospects of British Rail in Wales, and I am delighted to say that he is entering into specific consultations on how we will benefit from the Channel tunnel, how it will be handled, the improvement of passenger services and the improvement of surburban services from the valleys. Many actions are being taken, and British Rail is taking a positive view.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Thomas Cranmer (Anniversary)

28. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the commissioner are taking to support celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Cranmer.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): The commissioners have at present no plans regarding such celebrations.

Mr. Hunter: Bearing in mind that Thomas Cranmer was the architect of the Prayer Book, and that the Prayer Book is the birthright of the reformed Church of England and the bedrock of its doctrine, will my right hon. Friend encourage those responsible to ensure that the anniversary is observed? Does he agree that the refusal of the Post Office to issue a commemorative stamp is hardly an auspicious start?

Mr. Alison: I hope that my hon. Friend will be reassured to learn that plans are afoot, through Lambeth palace, to mark this important anniversary.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the commissioner make representations to the Post Office to get it to reverse its decision? Given some of the events that the Post Office commemorates with stamp issues, should not this rank high on the list?

Mr. Alison: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I shall do my best to make effective representations through the proper channels.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Although I believe that Cranmer came down on the wrong side of the fence—or perhaps I should say stake—would it not be as well, in this anniversary year if his splendid prayers and collects were studied by the Anglo-Americans, who shamefully mistranslated the Latin rites into banal English, and by those to whom will fall the task of revising them?

Mr. Alison: I shall weigh carefully what my hon. Friend has said on a sensitive area of possible division. He will recall that Cranmer coined the phrase "the Church militant"—before the word "militant" took on a more political connotation. I am confident that the Church militant will prove to be the Church triumphant, unlike the Militant Tendency.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am all for commemorating Archbishop Cranmer's birth, but what about Bishops Hooper, Ridley and Latimer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Thomas Cranmer.

Mr. Banks: My point is that they all suffered similar fates. Indeed, if they had burnt a few more Ridleys, we might not have had the poll tax Bill. The Bishop of Durham should be grateful for the fact that the Prime Minister does not have the powers that Queen Mary had in 1555. If she had, the pungent smell of roast cleric might be wafting up our nostrils now.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman is tempting me to show that the Church Commissioners are not 100 per cent. supporters and admirers of Thomas Cranmer. The hon.

Gentleman will recall that during his primacy he presided over the redistribution of the Church's assets after the dissolution of the monasteries. The Church Commissioners at least would have been much better off today had it not been for that royal diffusion.

"Faith in the City"

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much will be spent by the Church Commissioners on the Synod project related to "Faith in the City"; what proportion of the total expenditure this represents; to what areas of lay and spiritual activity the money will be allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The Measure enabling the Church Commissioners to make grants to the Church urban fund was approved by this House on 12 April and will be considered in another place tomorrow. If the Measure receives Royal Assent, the commissioners will make a grant of £1 million from their surplus income in 1987 and will consider repeating that in 1988 and subsequent years —£1 million represents 0·6 per cent. of their expenditure in 1987. The money will be used by the trustees of the fund to support the Church's work in urban priority areas.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the need for a massive Church effort in rural areas, where vicars sometimes have to look after as many as 10 or even 15 parishes on their own? They feel that their efforts and their parishes are funding the "Faith in the City" effort. Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that a special effort is made to get more clergy into the countryside as well as into the towns, and that rural clergymen are given their share of concern?

Mr. Alison: I assure my hon. Friend that the Church Commissioners do, indeed, contribute to other deprived areas, including rural deprived areas, through other sources and by other means than contributions to the Church urban fund. That substantial contribution to other areas, including rural areas, will continue.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sitting Times (Costs)

32. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the cost in overtime, other payments and overheads of sittings of the House beyond 10 o'clock for each year from 1958 for which records exist.

Mr. A. J. Beith ***(on behalf of the House of Commons Commission):*** The responsibility for overtime worked by House of Commons staff lies with Heads of Departments. Authorised submissions to the Fees Office for payment of overtime, while specifying the duration of the extra work, do not indicate the time covered. The information is, therefore, not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Member answering for the House of Commons Commission go away and try to get some accurate information? He will be aware, as will you, Mr. Speaker, that in 1945 only two sittings of the House went beyond 12 o'clock at night, whereas the average is now two a week. That not only entails massive costs but, reflects upon the Government's ability to get their business through—not just this Government, but others. Will the hon. Gentleman make recommendations on behalf of the House of Commons Commission to the Procedure Committee, when it is established, to ensure that proper overtime payments are made, that the costs to the House are reduced and that hon. Members can get on with their job at a seemly hour?

Mr. Beith: Having served on Procedure Committees that have made recommendations on this matter, I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman, but the job of the Commission is to ensure that the decisions that the House itself makes to sit late are implemented with satisfactory staff support, for which proper overtime payments are made.

Mr. Skinner: Can the hon. Gentleman get the statistics for the costs of keeping open the many bars in and around the Houses of Parliament, particularly the Press Bar? Does that involve a cost on the House? Is the taxpayer having to subsidise it to keep the journalists here after hours? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could address himself in particular to the Smoking Room, where most of the Tory Members do their boozing, and check on journalists, many of whom used to inhabit such places but for some reason do not any more, who write articles about it.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman raises some interesting matters, but his questions about the profitability of the various bars will have to be addressed to the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will my hon. Friend tell the House whether I am right in saying that considerable extra cost is incurred after 11 pm in providing transport for all the staff, who then go home by taxi, no matter how far away they live? If that is, indeed, the case, may we have the figures showing the additional transport costs for sittings that continue after 11 pm?

Mr. Beith: I wondered whether my hon. Friend was going to offer lifts in his taxi. Provision is, indeed, made for late-night transport for staff who have to work beyond the times at which public transport is available. Whether or not the House sits late, some of that transport has to be used by staff whose work for the *Official Report* and on other duties continues after the House has risen. Additional costs are, of course, incurred when the House sits late.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Tree-planting Schemes

30. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what plans the Church Commissioners have to replace trees recently lost on their lands and to contribute to broad-leaved woodland planting schemes.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): In the areas affected by the October hurricane the Church Commissioners propose to undertake replanting mainly in the 1988-89 season. It is the commissioners' policy to maintain and enhance the plantations on their agricultural

estates. They are considering the scope for establishing new broadleaved plantations in accordance with current EC and Government grant schemes and initiatives.

Mr. Chapman: As most of the damage to Church property during the October hurricane was caused to trees on land owned by the Church Commissioners, my right hon. Friend's answer will be widely welcomed. May I commend to him that the Church plays an even more active part this year in National Tree Week, which is to be organised by the Tree Council in November, by going ahead with its replanting schemes on a massive scale during that month?

Mr. Alison: I note with appreciation my hon. Friend's comments. He may like to know that the Church Commissioners planted over 10,000 trees in 1987. Because of the damage caused by the hurricane, we expect to plant a great many more.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Procedure Committee

33. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what recommendations of the Procedure Committee in the last Parliament have not been brought before the House for decision.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Four reports of the Procedure Committee in the last Parliament have not so far been debated or implemented. They are on the allocation of time to Government Bills in Standing Committee; short speeches, a parliamentary calendar, and on the use of time on the Floor of the House. A Government motion relating to the report on short speeches is at present on the Order Paper, and I hope that this can be decided upon by the House in the near future.

Mr. Allen: Is the Lord President aware that in addition to the report on the ten-minute speech rule there are a number of other items, such as the parliamentary calendar, drawn from outstanding reports and including such matters as the timetabling of Bills, which many hon. Members think it is important to debate? When will the right hon. Gentleman find time for a debate on those and other outstanding recommendations of the Procedure Committee, and what is his projected date for the establishment of the new Procedure Committee so that new Members in particular may make clear how they regard the rules of this club?

Mr. Wakeham: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's second point, as I said on Thursday, I hope to be able later this week to table a motion setting up the new Procedure Committee. The hon. Gentleman asked about the outstanding reports of the Procedure Committee. I am having discussions with hon. Members in all parts of the House about the best way forward. The Procedure Committee concluded, and I agree, that it would not be practicable or right to recommend radical changes that would be opposed by a large body of opinion in the House. Therefore, I am trying to get as much support as possible for change. I hope to arrange a debate in the near future.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend ask the Procedure Committee whether it would have agreed with the Leader of the Opposition when he excused the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) who was thrown out of this House for interrupting Prayers, and when he said that he understood the hooligan antics of his hon. Friend when they disrupted the proceedings during the Budget which caused the sitting to be suspended? It seems that the Leader of the Opposition has changed his mind recently about the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) although his Whips, of course, two of whom abstained, did not do so. In the past, of course, the Leader of the Opposition has supported many of these antics.

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that the Procedure Committee will be set up with general terms of reference. It will be open to the Committee to choose the subjects that it wishes to discuss, and it will be open to any hon. Member, including the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition or my hon. Friend, to give evidence to the Committee if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Heffer: In relation to the timetabling of Bills, will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that many hon. Members, when they first come to the House, are full of enthusiasm for getting home at midnight, if not earlier? When they have been here some time they understand that, on occasions, time is the only thing that the Opposition have if they are to hold up and properly debate Government Bills. That goes for all Governments. Before rushing into the timetabling of Bills, will the right hon. Gentleman consider that some of us believe that the Opposition have to oppose Bills when they think that those Bills are wrong? If that means that sometimes hon. Members, and especially younger hon. Members, have to go through the night, that is what ought to be done, rather than tying it up with the Government and letting them get away with things.

Mr. Wakeham: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I hope that he is not accusing my or any other Conservative Member of trying to rush into changing the procedures of the House. I agree that proper discussion is necessary before we make radical changes to the procedures of the House.

Visitors (Facilities)

34. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what recent representations he has received about facilities available to visitors to the House.

Mr. Wakeham: In addition to two parliamentary questions, one from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and one from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I have recently received representations from two hon. Members concerning unrelated aspects of the provision of facilities for visitors to the House.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend consider improving arrangements for visitors queuing to get into the Strangers Gallery? If we are to have television cameras in the House, will he consider making available closed-circuit television in Westminster Hall for those who are unable to get into the Gallery?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously, we could consider that suggestion. However, first of all we must proceed with

setting up the experiment for televising the House, and the Select Committee is working on that at the moment. I think that my hon. Friend's suggestion could be examined, but it probably will have to wait until we have gone through the other processes.

Mr. Cryer: Could not facilities for visitors be improved? People come from all over the country, they are often tired and hungry, yet the only facilities available are the Strangers' Cafeteria and the Members' Cafeteria, where hon. Members are limited to three people per Member——

Mr. Skinner: It is two now.

Mr. Cryer: I understand that it is now two visitors per Member. Can we make some useful innovations, such as turning the Royal Gallery into a lounge for visitors—the people who pay for this place—and provide cafeteria facilities there, instead of allowing their Lordships a handful of lounges in which to lounge around, and ensure that the public, instead of the geriatric wing down the corridor, get the facilities?

Mr. Wakeham: I have a feeling that if the hon. Gentleman wishes to improve the facilities for visitors in the House he has not suggested the most easy and practical way to make progress. In a recent written answer I told him that the existing facilities of the Palace of Westminster are already full to capacity and that no other suitable accommodation is readily available. The situation is unlikely to change until after extra catering accommodation becomes available in the new building. At that time the Catering Sub-Committee of the Services Committee may wish to give the matter further consideration.

Terrace (Catering Facilities)

35. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to improve the catering facilities on the Terrace of the House; at what cost to public funds; what the subsequent availability and capacity of this facility will be; what functions are expected to be held there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The Services Committee and the House of Commons Commission have approved in principle the provision in 1989 of a replacement tented pavilion of approximately the same dimensions as the existing facility. The relevant Services Sub-Committees will continue to monitor plans for this redevelopment and no final decision will be taken until a detailed and fully-costed feasibility study is available for consideration.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is great pressure from the House and from the public for the facilities on the Terrace? Will he seek to make available all-year-round catering facilities to hon. Members, to which members of the public can come if invited?

Mr. Wakeham: At this stage we are awaiting detailed proposals from the Catering Sub-Committee. It is aware of the pressure on the services that it provides, and no doubt will put forward relevant and interesting proposals for the Services Committee to consider.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Leader of the House must be aware that we treat our visitors abysmally in terms of the facilities that are available, because they are not able to take advantage of the few facilities that we have. Will the right hon. Gentleman look very carefully at a number of proposals that have been made to him, particularly the suggestion that Westminster Hall should be used during the summer? Westminster Hall is a huge, empty space and it is scandalous that it should be so under-used. Perhaps during the summer visitors could go there to get some refreshment.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that to some people that might be an improvement in the situation, but I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that although the use of Westminster Hall might improve matters, it would also present practical problems. I am sure that the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee could consider that suggestion.

Mrs. Clwyd: Would not one way of improving the catering facilities and the general well-being of hon. Members be to increase the variety of bottled water available to hon. Members, particularly since before Easter we were told on the Floor of the House that, in addition to English, Scottish and French waters, we would also have Welsh water? Where is the Welsh water?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with the hon. Lady. I like to drink Welsh water whenever I can. I do not know the answer to the question, but if she and I together make representations in the right quarter, we might be successful.

Business Questions (Early-Day Motions)

36. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what action he takes when early-day motions are brought to his attention at business questions.

Mr. Wakeham: These are referred to the Minister with responsibility for the issue raised and any action that seems appropriate is taken.

Mr. Dalyell: To which Minister did the Lord President refer early-day motions 228, 253, 272, 273 and 286? As he was intimately involved, according to Mr. Peter Jenkins in his book, in all the crucial meetings concerned with how to deal with the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) on Westland, does he refer to himself—that would be a problem—or does he refer to the Prime Minister? If he refers to the Prime Minister, what is he going to do about her organised mendacity on the subject?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw that phrase making an allegation against an individual Member of the House, to wit the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dalyell: Then it must be a shameless lack of candour.

Mr. Wakeham: It may be a disappointment to the hon. Gentleman, but when he asks supplementary questions these days, what he says does not come as a great surprise to the Minister at the Dispatch Box. Thus, most Ministers come, like myself, prepared to answer his supplementary question with the phrase, "I have nothing further to add."

European Fighter Aircraft

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the European fighter aircraft.

In the summer of 1985, we agreed with the German, Italian and Spanish Governments on the essential characteristics of a European fighter aircraft, or EFA, and on arrangements for a phase of project definition to explore the technical content and cost of a programme to develop such an aircraft. Project definition has been completed successfully, and the four nations have now to decide whether to embark on full development of the aircraft. I am very pleased to say that the Government for their part have decided to do so, subject of course to similar affirmative decisions by our three partners, which I understand should be made shortly, and subject also to final negotiation of acceptable contractual terms and conditions.

EFA is needed by the Royal Air Force to replace its air defence Phantoms and ground attack Jaguars at the end of their lives and to complement the Tornado F3 air defence aircraft. The Warsaw pact is well equipped with modern high performance fighters, and an agile aircraft with the characteristics of EFA is essential to maintain effective air defences beyond the late 1990s. EFA will also have a secondary ground attack capability.

The specification for EFA which has emerged from project definition has been rigorously and realistically examined in comparison with a number of possible alternatives. After an exhaustive investigation, I am in no doubt that EFA is the best and most cost-effective option to fulfil this essential military role. The prime contractors will be the Eurofighter consortium for the aircraft as a whole and the Eurojet consortium for the EJ200 engine. British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce respectively will play key roles in these consortia, drawing on invaluable experience gained during the experimental aircraft programme and the XG40 engine demonstrator programme, both of which have been partly funded from the defence budget. Overall the United Kingdom will have a 33 per cent. work share in the development of the aircraft. This will open up major opportunities for British industry, and I estimate that the development task alone will give direct long-term employment to between 3,000 and 4,000 people in the United Kingdom.

The cost to the United Kingdom of full development will be some £1·7 billion. This will be accommodated within the planned defence expenditure totals published last autumn by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The EFA programme is of vital importance to the United Kingdom aerospace industry. Although the technology involved is highly advanced, it is based on concepts proven during project definition and by the various demonstrator programmes to which I have referred. We have insisted that the prime contractors accept a very tight commercial package and the contracts that we are drawing up will place the technical and financial risks firmly where they should be, on the industrial consortia rather than on the Governments. All subcontracts for the aircraft's equipment will be subject to competition.

EFA will fulfil a vital defence need in the best and most cost-effective way. It will continue the trend of successful European collaboration in aerospace. It will ensure that our industry remains in the forefront of this technology to the end of the century and beyond, while ensuring the best possible value for money for the taxpayer. I commend the Government's decision to the House.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The right hon. Gentleman's statement, after all the doubts and delays of the past, will be greeted with some relief within the Royal Air Force and in Britain's aerospace and defence industries. There will also be relief that on this occasion at least the Government have been forced to support British and European industry and technology as they did not do in the case of Nimrod and Westland. What will be the total cost to Her Majesty's Government of the whole project? I take it that the £1·7 billion will not be the project's total cost. What will be the unit cost per aircraft to the United Kingdom?

Will the Royal Air Force get the 250 aircraft that it needs? Will the Secretary of State give the House that assurance? How many aircraft will be ordered by our European partners? We need to know that, because it affects the budget and unit costs. As the defence budget is under so much pressure, what projects will be cancelled and what commitments dropped to pay for the costs of this aircraft? Clearly, in view of the Government's nuclear obsession, no nuclear project will be dropped or cancelled.

Is the Secretary of State aware that there is considerable public concern as to whether he and his Department are capable of managing such a complex project in view of the appalling record of successive Tory Defence Ministers on early-warning aircraft, radars, torpedoes and missiles and including the appalling record of the Secretaries of State for Defence since 1979? Will he now satisfy hon. Members on both sides of the House that he has the will on this matter to put his own house in order and not waste even more taxpayers' money?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's welcome for this decision. I agree that it is good to feel that the project is coming under way. The total cost has still to be defined absolutely, but I would expect it to be of the order of £6 billion to £7 billion when it is completed. There is no change in the United Kingdom's declared production offtake, which remains 250 aircraft. It is too early in the project to forecast with certainty the eventual size of the United Kingdom purchase, or indeed, other partners' purchases of EFA.

It is inevitable when anything is spent on defence that something else must make way for it in the programme. However, after exhaustive discussion, I am certain that this project is affordable within the defence budget. As a matter of interest, it is likely to be considerably cheaper than the Tornado programme, which we are already accomplishing successfully.

The right hon. Gentleman shows some courage in raising the management of those projects. As he knows, we have followed a policy over the past few years of a major change in the procurement process under the leadership of Mr. Peter Levene and the Procurement Executive. In the type of project that we are drawing up nowadays—EFA is a typical example—the responsibility is placed firmly on the main contractor. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not object to my mentioning that all the cases that he

[Mr. Younger]

has cited of things that have gone wrong involved, in almost every case, contracts placed and drawn up under the previous Labour Administration which we have had to put right.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Will my right hon. Friend extract more amusement or derision from the spectacle of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), the Labour party Front-Bench spokesman, trying to disagree with a decision with which he really wants to agree?

Secondly, would my right hon. Friend not agree——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): How much is the right hon. Gentleman going to receive from British Aerospace?

Mr. Tebbit: Nothing is the answer to that—nothing.

Would my right hon. Friend agree with me that on this occasion the British Government are taking their decisions on a major international project in a timely fashion, which enables us to lead rather than be dragged along behind?

Mr. Younger: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. I was somewhat relieved to find that the right hon. Gentleman supported this project, as he has not supported any of the others that have come forward recently. As for timeliness, I also agree with my right hon. Friend that it is desirable that, having made our decision, we should make that fact clear, as I am sure our partners will greatly appreciate Britain's leadership in this important European undertaking.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The progress being made with the project is good news for European defence and European co-operation. When does the Minister hope to have affirmative decisions from the other countries involved?

Mr. Younger: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. Having been in touch with all the other partners, I am confident that they will be making their decisions within the next week or two and that we may therefore expect firm decisions from them all in the near future.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. friend agree that this decision will be particularly welcome to British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce, in that he has today announced that they are expected to be in the lead in respect of two essential aspects of the aeroplane? Does he further agree that his announcement brings to an end a period of uncertainty to which a material contribution was made by the constant poor-mouthing we heard from the Opposition Front Bench time and time again, when they seemed to be the only people willing to oppose the project?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments. So much gloomy speculation is made in advance of the facts of such matters that it can discourage people. I pay tribute to the way in which British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce not only kept themselves working hard on the project but put a considerable measure of their own resources into it; they will feel very pleased with today's decision.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Can the right hon. Gentleman inform the House whether the French still have any interest in this aircraft and whether, if they decide to renew that interest, he will ensure that they will not receive quite the bargain they seemed to be pursuing a year ago?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. I would not exclude the possibility of other countries joining or rejoining the project. I am bound to say that its form is clearly defined and I would not wish to interrupt its progress by any such negotiations. As for France, we are in close touch with the French in respect of many procurement matters. If at any point we can usefully collaborate with them, I should certainly be prepared to discuss that possibility.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the international procurement machinery which produced the Tornado was widely regarded as unnecessarily large and bureaucratic? What action will he take to prevent that being true in respect of the new project?

Mr. Younger: I have heard such views expressed at times, and I know that my right hon. Friend knows a great deal about that matter. We will try to avoid any features of the Tornado organisation that were unduly bureaucratic. However, it is worth recording that the Tornado project was outstandingly successful and has produced an aircraft which, almost without doubt, is the best of its kind in the world.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): The Minister will know that the unit cost will depend upon each country taking the number of aircraft in which it declares an interest. Any comparison with the Tornado and its unit costs must also depend on the numbers being taken up. What contractual provision is there for tying each country firmly to taking the number of aircraft that they say they want?

Mr. Younger: There is no procedure in existence to tie any of the countries to a future decision at the time of the next stages. This is not the stage at which we decide precisely how many individual aircraft each country will order; it is the stage at which we decide together to go forward, on the basis of the numbers already declared, to the full development stage. When the next stage is reached, each country will make its own decision, in the same way that we will.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): In view of the importance of promoting successful European co-operation, can the Secretary of State be more forthcoming about the cost effectiveness of the EFA project? Will he confirm that, if research and development costs are taken into account, the unit cost of the project will be in the region of £36 million? How does that compare with the likely cost of the alternatives?

Mr. Younger: As the hon. Gentleman will, I think, appreciate, we would never discuss unit costs of an aircraft of this sort publicly, for obvious reasons. I can tell him, however, that the greatest possible care and effort has been made to compare all the possibilities, including any aircraft which are available elsewhere and which could play a comparable role. I am absolutely satisfied that the proposed EFA is the most cost-effective way of meeting the threat that we are likely to face.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this project and on the 33 per cent. share, which will be welcomed by the hundreds of British Aerospace workers in the military aircraft division in Lancashire. Following his comments, I hope that he can confirm that we shall now see an end to the speculation from the Opposition that is sowing doubts in people's minds. Can he also confirm that this finally means the end of any involvement of the French as a major partner in the project?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that all those concerned in the various British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce and many other factories in British industry will take this as a very encouraging development. Like my hon. Friend, I hope that those who have seen fit to cast doubts on the likelihood of the project's proceeding will now feel that they were wrong.

As for the work share, I believe that, together with subcontracting and business for many firms of all sizes, the project will employ many thousands before it is finished. In answer to my hon. Friend's question about French participation, we would always be willing to collaborate with France in any parts of such a project, but I do not think that at this stage we will wish to interrupt the progress of the four-nation plan to bring in another partner.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Does the Secretary of State recognise the potential importance of the project to Ferranti? Does he also acknowledge that, if we maximise the direct and indirect benefits of the work to British industry, it is vital that the high-technology contracts go to indigenous European consortia, rather than to foreign-based multinationals?

Mr. Younger: That point is certainly very much in our minds as these matters are decided. Contracting for the EFA, for all sorts of reasons, will clearly be on a basis of the best bid being accepted, but I am glad to say that British companies are well represented in all the alternatives.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will receive grateful thanks for his warmly welcomed announcement by my constituents who work at the military aircraft division headquarters of British Aerospace at Warton, in my constituency. Will he tell us whether he will now urge the other partner countries and the United Kingdom Government to pursue every export opportunity for the European fighter aircraft?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has played a prominent role in pressing for the aircraft. I am sure that he feels very glad about the decision.

As for export opportunities, we certainly hope—all the partners hope—that by the mid to late 1990s there will be a considerable market for this type of aircraft. We also hope that the EFA will be very well placed for overseas sales.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The costs per unit will ultimately depend on the market. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell what market assumptions are made about purchases by our partners and, indeed, by third parties?

Mr. Younger: That will be a very relevant consideration when we come to the necessary decision about production investment. So far, we have concentrated on ensuring that the staff requirement for the EFA suits our own needs, and we believe that it will also suit export needs.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My right hon. Friend's welcome announcement is an endorsement of industry in Britain, and a commitment to the defences of Britain and of NATO. The Jaguar and Phantom aircraft will require replacement in about the mid-1990s. Is the EFA project on line and on time for that?

Mr. Younger: Yes, I can confirm that we aim for EFA to come into service in the late 1990s, which should be just about the right time. My hon. Friend is absolutely correct in saying that it is because we have extremely capable industries in Europe, which can without any difficulty or doubt embark on such a complicated project, that we are able to make progress of this sort. I think that it is very important from the point of view of Eurospace industry that the project should be successful and I am sure that it will be.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the definition of the plane include evading radar, in which case, would it not be cheaper to buy single-engined Cessnas of the type that flew into Red square in Moscow and to put the investment into civilian aircraft, in which this country is lagging behind, to the extent that British Airways is almost totally dependent upon Boeing? Why are those huge sums so readily available for such a project when the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards committee had the greatest difficulty in applying their technology, for example, to kidney machines? Why cannot the National Health Service, education and social services have that sort of money put into them to create jobs?

Mr. Younger: I am sure that people in British industry who are hoping and expecting to get a lot of work for many years out of the project will note that the hon. Gentleman is pretty hostile to the whole idea. With regard to spending the money on other things, I do not see a great benefit in having the most marvellous kidney machines or whatever in this country if the country is unable to defend itself when it needs to.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, which will greatly reassure many of us in the north-west. Will he outline the mechanism for work sharing that will be used on the project to reflect the number of aircraft that each nation decides to buy, when it decides to buy them and, more specifically, to reflect the occasions when a country such as ours finds exports on its own? That country may find that, if there is a set percentage from the outset, a lot of the work is carried out by other member countries.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point about work share. At present, we are talking about the work share in the full development phase. That is based on the declared numbers now, which gives the United Kingdom a 33 per cent. share of the work in that full development stage. In future, when we come to decisions on production investment and the production stage, the work share will be defined on the basis of the aircraft ordered. One of the great benefits of such a collaborative effort is that, in the overseas sales, all the partners benefit from the production of the aircraft. That is why costs are containable in this high-technology project. It means that

[Mr. Younger]

everybody benefits from the export sales made, although the country that does the exporting has a greater benefit than any other.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to bear in mind the fact that subsequent business today is under a guillotine. I shall allow questions on the statement to continue until 4 o'clock and then move on.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Does the Secretary of State accept the key importance of the project for the regional economy in Britain, in the areas that are dependent upon the aerospace industry? In designing the project, has he had an opportunity to study the regional implications throughout Europe of such public procurement decisions, which will be important for job opportunities in many European regions? Will he address himself to the question raised by the official Opposition spokesperson, the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), about the defence role of the aircraft and confirm that the aircraft is to be involved in conventional, non-nuclear activity?

Mr. Younger: On the regional implications, we expect each member country to have its own policies on those matters. As far as we are concerned, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the British aerospace industry is fairly well spread throughout the country, and various policies have been followed to try to spread it more widely. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the contracting of the project will be spread throughout the European industry. I think that that is the main reassurance that he needs.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Does my right hon. Friend remember that only a few months ago both the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) went to Bristol and one or two other aerospace constituencies in an attempt to frighten constituents into voting Labour, on the basis that the project would be cancelled? The lie has now been given to their rumourmongering and attempt to frighten.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the EJ200 will be available for the first production unit of EFA, or will an interim engine be used in the meantime?

Mr. Younger: I note my hon. Friend's initial remarks. It does not surprise me in the least to find that scare stories that are not based on fact can be dealt with easily by him. It is clear that those concerned listened not to the other advice but to his advice, which is right.

I understand that good progress is being made on the EJ200 engine. A decision will be made fairly soon on how long the interim engine solution will last before the main proper engines can be introduced.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Secretary of State gracefully admit that the Opposition have always seen the need for this role and that every Labour Member representing a constituency in the east of Scotland, including my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), in whose constituency Ferranti is, have approached management and Ministers about the project? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain what he means by "best bid", which is the phrase that he used in answer to my hon. Friend the Member the Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang)? Will this take into account the real needs and overheads of research and development, since Ferranti has been a world leader in this area of technology?

Mr. Younger: We take into account the bids that are submitted in the round. We do not necessarily consider only price. We take into account what is put into the bid, the technology and the reputation of the firm that lies behind the bid. Having said that, we look also for the best bid that we can get.

It is fair to say that Opposition Members have frequently advocated projects such as the EFA, and have done so genuinely. The trouble is that they seem to forget that when voting for huge reductions in the defence budget and advocating the abolition of the Defence Sales Organisation. What they say to constituents is sometimes not compatible with what they say in Parliament.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the public generally and those in the Royal Air Force especially will see the EFA as another example of the Government giving the RAF the aircraft that it needs to carry out the tasks that it has been assigned? Many of the comments coming from other quarters will be seen for what they are—scaremongering and nothing to do with reality. Will my right hon. Friend take it from me that the RAF will be delighted that the prime contractors will be responsible for the jobs as assigned?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can confirm that the RAF is unanimous in the view that the EFA is the right aircraft to meet the threat that it, the RAF, will be required to meet. That is an important factor in considering whether it is right to spend the sums that will be involved on the project.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that there is considerable doubt among the public generally and those who are knowledgeable about the defence industry about the competence of the Ministry of Defence to manage projects such as the EFA? To plead in aid one individual—Peter Levene—does little to allay this fear. It will continue unless there is a clear sign that the Ministry is to be strengthened.

May we have some assurances about the response of the Secretary of State and representatives of other Governments who are involved in the project to overtures that are likely to come from the United States that it should be a partner in the project?

Mr. Younger: As I said to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), we do not exclude the possibility of other nations participating in this programme. We shall be prepared to discuss that if any proper proposals are made to the partners on that basis.

The hon. Gentleman has referred to the contracting problems of the Ministry of Defence. I say to the hon. Gentleman, who knows more than most about this subject, that any observer will know that a number of serious things have gone wrong with contracting in this areas in recent years. Any serious observer will agree, however, that major steps have been and are being taken to put matters right, and that the new forms of contract, of which the EFA is a clear example, do not have in them the bad features of the old contracts which led to cost

overruns. It is my determination to try to ensure that in contracting practice from now on there will be much less likelihood of any overruns of the sort that we have had in the past.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in this project above all it is essential to ensure that the radar equipment and all the electronics are supplied by British and other European contractors and not from across the Atlantic?

Mr. Younger: I hope that all these major items will be supplied with the maximum participation of British firms. I cannot give a blanket guarantee that, whatever the bids that are put in, British firms will have preference over all others. Above all, we are looking for value for money and the best bid, taking all factors into account. I am sure that that is the right way in which to proceed and to avoid cost overruns of the sort that have occurred in the past.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I welcome the statement, but was my right hon. Friend surprised to hear the Opposition refer to difficulties with torpedo programmes? Will he confirm that, when the Government took office, they brought the Sting Ray torpedo programme under control——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has made a statement on the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Brazier: —and ensured that it would be the best of its kind in the world?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. Perhaps I tended to be rather too kind to Opposition Members by not rubbing in too much the fact that most of the sad failures in procurement policy were contracts engaged in during their time in government. But I do not make too much of that.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the Minister take this opportunity to refute the untrue allegations made by Conservative Members that we have opposed the project? If any confusion has been caused, it is because of the Government's procrastination in making up their minds. That is why we welcome the fact that the programme is going ahead.

In his statement and in answer to questions, the Secretary of State said that the plane will come into operation in the late 1990s. On 8 December and 26 January, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement said that the plane would go into service in the mid-1990s. Are we to understand that there has been a five-year slippage since January, or is the plane due to go into service in the mid to late 1990s?

Will the Secretary of State be a little firmer on the radar issue? When will the suite for the aircraft be ordered? Will we be in the ridiculous situation that we were in with the Tornado and type 23 frigates? There was a first-class vehicle with no radar, no combat capability, and no command and control system, because of the Government's appalling mismanagement of our defence economy.

Mr. Younger: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I hope that his voice is the real one from the Opposition about welcoming the project. He should have a word with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who appears to be deeply hostile to the project. Perhaps I could leave it to them to sort it out between themselves. *[Interruption.]* No problem.

As regards the date, I said the mid to late 1990s. Perhaps I was being unduly cautious. I hope that it will be ready for service about the mid-1990s.

As I said earlier, when the Government decide which consortium is to produce the radar, responsibility will be firmly placed on one main contractor. It will be required to provide the radar to specification and on time before it gets paid. That is the incentive contract, which is our real security for procurement decisions from now on.

Points of Order

4.2 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): May I raise a point of order that arises out of Question Time, Mr. Speaker? I understand that you called the Secretary of State for Wales to order because he used the word "hypocrisy" or "hypocrite". Of course, all efforts to raise the standard of language that is used by Ministers of the Crown are highly commendable; we understand what an arduous task you must have in that respect. But is your ruling unduly restrictive?

I recall a famous occasion—it was a bit before my time, but it happened in the House—when Mr. Lloyd George was dealing with the leader of the Social Democrats of the day, who crossed the Floor and assisted the Conservatives at the time. Lloyd George said that he objected not so much to his crossing the Floor but to the "slime of hypocrisy" that he left behind.

Ruling that out of order is a restrictive method of reply and use of language. There are many occasions, particularly when dealing with this Administration, when we must use the word "hypocrisy" to be accurate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can deal with the matter. I thought that I heard the right hon. Gentleman accuse another hon. Member of hypocrisy. That is unparliamentary. To use the word in a general sense would not be unparliamentary.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the matter of parliamentary language, it will be within your knowledge that, at 10 o'clock this morning, I asked the learned Clerk why, on Tuesday, the Leader of the Opposition was allowed to use the words "organised mendacity", why I was equally allowed to do so on Wednesday, and why, by Friday, the term had become unacceptable. Will you explain?

Mr. Speaker: I was not present at that time on Friday, but I am sure that the Chairman of Ways and Means, who was in the Chair at the time, took the right decision in the matter.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a different point of order arising out of Question Time, Sir. In answer to question No. 3 today relating to the coal industry, the Secretary of State for Wales said that not a word had been heard from the Opposition Front Bench since certain comments made by the Minister of State in the Welsh day debate. My clear recollection is that, the day after that debate, in an attempt to divert attention from the humiliation that the Secretary of State suffered in the debate, he issued through Conservative Central Office a statement——

Mr. Speaker: There must be a point of order to me. The right hon. Gentleman must not seek to continue——

Mr. Williams *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must not seek to continue Question Time.

Mr. Williams: This is a legitimate point of order, Mr. Speaker. Misleading the House, even inadvertently, is and always has been subject to a point of order. I have given you, Sir——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the right hon. Member that he is attempting a continuation of Question Time.

Mr. Williams: I am not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We had a long run on question No. 3. The final hon. Member to be called was from the Opposition Front Bench. If there was any misunderstanding or disagreement with what the Secretary of State said, he should have disagreed with it then and not now. I cannot hear a point of order on the matter. This is a continuation of Question Time. I call Mr. Madden.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. It is an attempt to continue Question Time.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will remember that, on Friday, I raised with you an article that appeared in *The Guardian* that morning concerning the Economic League. At column 1100 of *Hansard*, you said that you would consider the article over the weekend. I thought that I should report to you and to the House that I contacted the Economic League this morning. It confirmed that it holds information about me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a matter on which the hon. Gentleman has written to me, asking me to look at it as a matter of privilege. He knows that he cannot now raise it on the Floor of the House. I shall consider carefully what the hon. Member has said in this letter that I have in my hand.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to the point of order that was raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), Mr. Speaker. I once wrongly said in the House that a Conservative Member was a "bloody hypocrite". I was quite rightly instructed by the Speaker to withdraw. I withdrew the word "bloody". I never withdrew the word "hypocrite". Why is it right for me to get away with the word "hypocrite" but not right for other hon. Members to say that somebody is a hypocrite?

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the whole House will agree that we need to ensure that we do not allege any dishonourable motive of any kind on the part of an hon. Member. In answer to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I stated that it was perfectly in order to use the word "hypocrisy" in a general sense, but not of each other.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), Mr. Speaker. I realise that you have received a letter asking whether privilege is involved in the Economic League's activities. Since Friday, the Economic League has been making further statements about hon. Members and the files that it keeps on them. The matter is important and urgent. It is clearly a serious attack on democracy in this country.

When do you expect to be able to report to the House on your deliberations on what appears to be a breach of privilege of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I received the letter just before I came into the Chamber. I have not yet had time to consider it.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you come to examine the article in *The Guardian* about the Economic League's blacklist, will you bear in mind that to appear on the Economic League's blacklist—I am mentioned in the article as being on the blacklist because I went to Chile—is for some of us a badge of honour? Will you bear in mind also the separation between hon. Members, who cannot be harmed, and others who are not able to reply and whose job prospects may be adversely affected by that sort of conclusion?

Mr. Speaker: I will certainly consider what the hon. Member said.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about "organised mendacity", Mr. Speaker, you said that the matter was dealt with on Friday by the Chairman of Ways and Means. I heard my hon. Friend, and I think that hon. Members should know, if they have not already read *Hansard*, exactly what he said, because it is important.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the matter was dealt with entirely correctly by the occupant of the Chair at that time. It is not for me to pass judgment on what he said on that occasion.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, I cannot hear the hon. Gentleman on a matter that happened on Friday. He should have raised the matter then.

Mr. Skinner: But——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance Bill

[5TH ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

Clause 104

POWER TO DESIGNATE AUTHORITIES

4.10 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment No. 157, in page 57, line 10, leave out clause 104.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 158, in page 57, line 10, at beginning insert 'After 1st April 1995'.

No. 159, page 57, line 11, leave out 'in his opinion' and insert

"following a report under subsection (1A) below, he believes that—".

No. 160, in page 57, line 16, at end insert—

"(1A) Before designating an authority under this part the Secretary of State shall produce a report showing the extent to which the accountability of that authority to its electorate has been affected by the provisions of Part I of this Act.".

No. 161, page 57, line 12, after second 'the', insert 'preceding financial'.

No. 162, in page 57, line 19, after the second 'the', insert 'preceding financial'.

No. 163, in page 57, line 33, leave out from 'and' to end of line 38, and insert—

"(a) these principles shall be the same for all authorities;
(b) these principles shall be notified to authorities by October in the preceding year.'.

Dr. Cunningham: As the Bill stands, part VIII is entitled "Limitation of Charges Etc" and clause 104, the first clause in that part of the Bill, sets out the arrangements under which the Secretary of State for the Environment will have powers retrospectively to control, cap or reduce the poll tax of every local authority in England. Later on there is an exemption for authorities with budgets of less than £15 million a year. However, that is a sweeping, general central power given to Ministers under these proposals. Again, we see exploded the Government's claim that poll tax is a tool to make local government accountable to the electorate. Here we have the Government taking powers to ensure that, whichever way the electorate votes or whatever it decides about the local authority decisions in its area, the Government can countermand those decisions.

Under these proposals, the Secretary of State will have the power to order councils to reduce the level of poll tax, even after they have started to collect it and have implemented a budget based upon it. That will not only add to the financial and administrative burdens placed upon local authorities, but will throw budget strategies into chaos and further increase the powers of central Government over those communities. The implementation of these powers will cause huge disruption, whenever and wherever they are used.

[Dr. Cunningham]

What is clear in this part of the Bill is that the poll tax is not about local accountability. It is about cutting the spending, the services and, above all, reducing the independence of local government yet again. We suspect that it is especially aimed at elected Labour authorities. Implicit, too, in those proposals is the idea that accountability is all right and will be satisfactory for authorities with small budgets of under £15 million. However, different parameters apply to authorities with budgets in excess of that arbitrary figure.

The inclusion of these powers gives the game away. Repeatedly, the Secretary of State has said that the poll tax will improve accountability and the responsibility of voters. He has argued that more people will vote as a result of the poll tax. I hope that he is right at least in that aim. I want more people to vote in local elections. However, what is the point? The point is totally undermined by the fact that, however those people may decide to vote on the level of their budget or services, the Secretary of State is reserving the right to himself to change the implications of their vote, and he is doing so on arguments which, frankly, do not bear scrutiny.

As the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has pointed out, community charges, which are to replace domestic rates, will change rapidly from year to year and will bear little relation to local spending. That has been pointed out to Ministers in Committee over and over again. Changes in grants and changes in the national business tax made by Ministers could, and almost certainly will, have serious repercussions on the level of poll tax. Again, we may see fluctuations and major changes which do not result from decisions taken at local level. Therefore, the ability of local authorities to adjust their income to take account of such changes is threatened by those proposals.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy also pointed out,

"that community charges"

—that is the poll tax—

"will be heavily dependent on variations in population and changes in the Government's assessment of a Council's need. This will considerably weaken the link between charges and council spending."

It has been pointed out previously that changes in spending, up or down, in local authorities can be affected by a variety of factors. They do not necessarily have anything to do with either competence, or, for that matter, incompetence, profligacy or efficiency. Changes in expenditure, up or down, are determined by a variety of often very complex factors and decisions.

Let us examine the implications of all this in a little more detail. Councils normally begin working on their budgets in the autumn. They come to their budget-making meeting in the early part of the year. They announce their budget and they fix a poll tax by 1 April, which is now the legal requirement. Election campaigns then begin. Elections take place in the first week in May. After these elections, after an authority has set and announced its budget, fixed its poll tax, and fought and won an election —in other words, it has gained the approval of the voters —the Secretary of State decides that he will overturn the whole procedure. He decides to designate the authority under the provisions of clause 8 of the Bill. The whole thing becomes a farce. The determination of the budget, the setting of the poll tax, the putting of all the arguments to the local electorate are all a farce, because Ministers can then overturn and undermine the whole procedure, which includes the decision of the electors themselves. That is done by enforcing a retrospective change in the poll tax and, therefore, in the budget and the programme of the authority. First, this is done in the name of accountability and, secondly, of improving efficiency.

It beggars belief that these proposals can be put forward in that way, because they will do exactly the opposite. They will undermine accountability and they will cause disruption, inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the administration, not just of finances but, more importantly, of important local services. That was wonderfully summed up by the Minister for Local Government in Committee who, when talking about those powers, stated:

"As I have already described, such procedures will enable us to use our charge capping powers to bring rapid relief to hard-pressed charge payers faced with excessive demands from authorities which, for some reason, seem quite irrationally to have no regard for the interests of their electors."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 17 March 1988; c. 1484.]

It is difficult to find a better example of doublespeak.

The decision of the electors as recorded in the ballot box—presumably a decision that displeases the Minister and makes him decide to invoke his powers—is described by the Minister as

"irrationally to have no regard for the interests of . . . electors."

What if the electors have chosen an authority of their persuasion and a council programme to their liking? That can hardly be described as irrational. Voting for a council of their choice is the conscious decision of people in a democratic society—but not a bit of it under this Government because that choice can and no doubt will be cynically set aside by central controls as it has been under the rate-capping proposals. At bottom, the proposals are yet another major central power for Ministers over democratically elected local government. They give Ministers the power to act in defiance of decisions of the local electors and against their express wishes as recorded in a secret ballot.

The Labour party is unwilling to accept such proposals or that such powers should be given to Ministers. That is why we have tabled the amendment to delete the whole miserable clause from the Bill.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Like the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, I too am sorry that these provisions are in the Bill, but, unlike Opposition Members, that is not because I regard the provision as wrong, but simply because the antics of the lunatic few on the Left have made the clause necessary. We should focus on that. We should be sorry for the fact that the clause is here, but we should consider why it is necessary and, if the clause is ever to be deleted, we should focus attention on the fact that local government must try to put its house in order. If local government goes on making community charge capping necessary, that is real proof that we have weak local government in this country because, by definition, local government which does not co-operate with the Government of the day is weak. *[Interruption.]* I shall explain exactly what I mean in a moment.

If one is to have a successful democracy in any country, one needs strong local government. I am not against strong local government but, because of the way in which it is behaving at the moment, I do not believe that it is

strong. The evidence about why the community charge-capping clauses are necessary is overwhelming. At the moment, at least 10 councils are overspending by more than £100 per head. Indeed, two are overspending by over £200 per head and one by the gross amount of over £300 per head. If such sums of money are charged over and above the average community charge in future, any responsible Government, of whatever political colour, is duty bound to act on behalf of the country as a whole.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) suggested that the clause may be aimed at Labour authorities. I hope that it is because that list of 10 councils which are high-spending are Labour authorities which must be called to account.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): When is the hon. Gentleman going to get it through his thick head that one reason—the major reason—why Labour local authorities, such as the 10 that he is talking about are such high spenders is that they have the greatest concentration of need within their areas? Until he recognises that, I am surprised that he even gets up to make a speech.

Mr. Wilshire: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but when I examine the record and detail of those and other authorities, what I discover is gross inefficiency, gross mismanagement, and gross over-staffing. When such authorities put all those things in order, I will listen to the hon. Gentleman's pleas about money. In all these debates, and especially in this debate, the comments of Opposition Members are predictable.

Dr. Cunningham: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman is beginning to recognise that the Opposition are predictable. That is because we believe in people having the right to an unfettered democratic choice in local elections to elect the council they choose as being in their best interests without such draconian powers which, if the hon. Gentleman were describing them in eastern Europe, he would call Soviet.

Mr. Wilshire: I am coming to the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. I am grateful to him for raising it so that we can talk about it in a minute. However, before I come to that point, I want to mention something else that the hon. Gentleman said in his opening remarks—that the clause gives the game away. Indeed it does, but the game that it gives away is that the Labour party has not the slightest intention of learning the lessons of the past; nor does it seem to have the slightest intention of co-operating. That underlines the fact that this clause is absolutely necessary because Opposition Members have given the game away about their future intentions.

The opposition to the clause is predictable. It starts by saying that the provisions are a restriction of local freedom. They are not, and I shall explain in a moment why I take that view. It suggests that the clauses are not necessary if local accountability works properly. Earlier in the Report stage, I made the point that exemptions and rebates were not the avenue down which we should go. I believe that community charge capping is the quid pro quo for exemptions and rebates because it is they that undermine local accountability.

The Opposition are revealing that they have a totally flawed view of the role of local government and an even more flawed view of local government's relationship with central Government. They are also revealing that, despite harping on certain minorities, they intend to do their level best to ignore the need to protect the minority of voters in a Left-wing Labour authority. Such a minority needs thought and protection as much as any other minority.

If one thinks through the real role of local government, one comes to the inescapable conclusion that community charge capping is absolutely inevitable. If one thinks about local government and how it arises, one realises that it comes from two different things. It comes first from a feeling of "localness"—I shall say something about that later—but also from the need to organise national services on a local basis. The first of those roles—the expression of a local view—is the truly local role of local government, with which no Government should seek to interfere. It is the second of the roles in which central Government becomes involved—the need to deliver national services on a local basis. Central Government must oversee that and can dictate its standards to local government.

That point enables me to answer the point that the hon. Member for Copeland raised. Local government's form, powers and finances all derive from here in Parliament. If Government can define those things, Government can limit them; that makes community charge capping inevitable. In reply to the hon. Gentleman, I should say that no party in this country believes that local government can be absolutely free of obligation. We in Parliament insist that local government must empty dustbins and provide free education for every child over the age of five.

Would the hon. Member for Copeland defend the ballot box locally if a group of local electors voted in a county council that was pledged not to provide education until children were six? Would the Opposition argue that that is a matter for the ballot box locally, or would they, like me——

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): If a group of councillors fought a county council election on the promise that they would provide nursery education for the under-fives and that resulted in a higher poll tax, I would defend it. That is what the hon. Gentleman is trying to stop today, but that is where there should be free choice. If people want to vote for free school education outside the statutory system, they should be able to vote for it, if they are prepared to pay for it. Yet that is what the hon. Gentleman will not allow.

4.30 pm

Mr. Wilshire: That is a fascinating smokescreen. The hon. Gentleman's silence on my point proves exactly what I was saying, which is that the Labour party, like us, believes, properly, that there are certain things that Parliament can force local authorities to do, such as educate everybody over the age of five. That is absolutely right. All parties believe that there are some things that local government must do. Equally—this is the other point behind the smokescreen—every party has several things which it believes local government should or should not do, with which other parties disagree.

Instead of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) lecturing me on education and the under-fives, let us consider grammar schools or parents and children being able to opt out. If I understand Opposition Members, they would compulsorily require local government to get rid of grammar schools and they would prevent parents from opting out of the state system.

[Mr. Wilshire]

That is the Labour party, properly, choosing its policies. But equally it must be absolutely right for the Conservative party to decide what it believes is a priority, and it wishes local government to behave responsibly on finance. Faced with the evidence of local authorities not behaving responsibly, this party believes that it must act.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): My local authority has never been rate capped in the nine years of this Government. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that its decision to expand nursery education in the past eight years is wrong?

Mr. Wilshire: I cannot think how the hon. Gentleman reaches that conclusion from what I said. That is not the point. If, while acting in a financially responsible way, a local authority wishes to exercise discretion and go beyond its statutory obligations, that is a matter for it. I am merely arguing that there will come a point beyond which a local authority cannot go.

The Conservative party is saying that financial responsibility is a key element in strong local government. That is why, at the beginning of my comments, I said that at present we have a financially irresponsible group of councils which are therefore democratically weak. If we can establish strong finances, it then lies with the Government to provide limits, and those limits will be enforced through capping. That is proper and inevitable.

The limits are set in four ways. Central Government have no choice but to take into account the national economy. When 27 per cent. of public expenditure is spent by local government, no central Government in Whitehall can ignore it. If several local authorities intend to flout the interests of the national economy, capping becomes absolutely inevitable and is absolutely right. The same is true for the local economy.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) asked me about local discretion on nursery education. That is all very well, but the spending power of the local community must be taken into account and the council must not take more than the community can afford to give. One must accept that if a borough has a vastly high community charge, it will drive people out selectively.

Mr. Barron: Is that not a matter for the community that elects people to local councils, and not for the Secretary of State?

Mr. Wilshire: No. As I said earlier, there is the question of a minority. The Labour party is for ever lecturing us about its views on minorities. In return, I must point out that, if a Left-wing militant council is trying to soak the local community, there comes a point when somebody must stand up for the minority who are being asked to pay vastly excessive charges.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that my local authority, Calderdale, which has not been controlled by Labour since 1974, two years ago had the second highest rate rise of 41 per cent. when it was run by the Conservative party? That was because the rate support grant had been cut from 85 per cent. in 1979 to 54 per cent. now and it had absolutely nothing to do with a Left-wing Labour council.

Mr. Wilshire: There are authorities and authorities. I am delighted to say that my borough council this year has reduced its rate by 73 per cent. and is providing better services than ever before. But if we bandy about the figures of small authorities, where will it get us?

Opposition Members will be relieved to hear that this may be the last speech that I make on Report, but I shall not stick to that intention if they bait me much further.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I have been following the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully and if I understand it rightly, having found it, the hon. Gentleman believes that the mandate given to central Government is stronger than that given to local government, so central Government have the right to overrule local government in the interests of the people of that area. Does the hon. Gentleman accept the other side of that logic—that if central Government of a different colour decide that a local authority is not maintaining services to a required standard, they can direct local government to spend more on those services by virtue of the same sort of mandate?

Mr. Wilshire: If the hon. Gentleman follows the argument through, he will find that if it is right for Parliament to decree the dustbins shall be emptied and that the over-fives shall be educated, then it is proper for Parliament to decide that the over-fives shall be educated. Naturally—that is the role of central Government. As I said earlier, local government arises from two wholly separate areas: the local feeling of differentness and separateness, which cannot be fettered, and the national provision of services on a local basis. A Government must involve themselves in that latter area.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): What does the hon. Gentleman intend to do to protect minorities who vote Labour in areas where mean-minded, miserly, Tory councils are elected which do not provide adequate social services and many other services? Will he also protect the rights of those minorities?

Mr. Wilshire: One of the best ways to protect any minority in a local community is to have a well-run Conservative council.

I suspect that this will be my last speech on Report, if I reach the end of it.

Mr. Jerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that this year the highest rate increases are in Tory-controlled authorities? For example, in Gillingham in Kent the rate rise was 42 per cent., in Melton in Leicestershire it was 41·2 per cent., in Suffolk Coastal it was 39·1 per cent., in West Wiltshire it was 41·4 per cent. and in Brentwood in Essex expenditure over target was 282 per cent. Is the hon. Gentleman advocating that those local authorities should be rate capped?

Mr. Wilshire: It occurs to me that perhaps an adjournment would be in order so that the Labour party can present one script. On the one hand we are being told that Parliament should increase the base services that must be provided and on the other that we should not spend money to provide them. That is a fascinating argument against itself.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): When considering the point that the percentage increases may have been large, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that my constituents in

Middlesbrough pay the highest rate poundage in the whole country—282p in the pound? Although this year's rate rise in percentage terms is small, it is penal.

Mr. Wilshire: That is why authorities with small budgets are exempted from these clauses. The real risks to local and national economies come from the huge spending authorities which spend vast sums rather than from the small ones, many of which were on that list.

We are debating this clause for one reason only, and that is the antics of the militant few. Without them this clause would not have been necessary. The Labour party has made the whole Bill necessary and has made community charge capping necessary. Sadly, I see no chance or intention of the Labour party changing what it has done in the past. If its current campaign of misinformation and calls to defy the law are anything to go by, the Labour party has no desire to help, and no chance of helping anyone. All it will do is harm services both locally and nationally. All it will do is damage local government and make it weaker than it is at the moment. Worst of all, if it persists in this manner, the Labour party will undermine democracy in this country.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): If anyone is undermining democracy it is those who have contempt for the electorate. The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) has spelt out—as have Ministers in Committee and in the House—the way in which he believes that choice should be available only if it conforms with his opinion. Nothing but contempt is displayed by using words such as irresponsible, irrational and excessive when talking about the right of people to vote to choose the level and quality of service that they wish to have.

The Bill and clause 104 illustrate admirably the duplicity that exists in the thinking and attitude towards the poll tax. Only a week ago in this House—one can read this in *Hansard*—the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"Everyone should have the right, through the ballot box, to influence the level of service that is provided and the price that they must pay through their taxes. That is the essence of accountability and of responsible democratic control of the services provided by local authorities"—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1988; Vol.131, c. 582.]

I cannot think of anything that undermines the principle laid down by the Secretary of State more than the idea of the icy fingers of poll tax capping.

The notion that people can choose what they want so long as they are not able to vote to spend the money to provide for their choice is not only duplicity, but runs extremely close to absolute contempt for the representative democratic system of our country. The Government, having taken control of the unified business rate, having changed the proposals in the Bill—as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said—regarding the distribution and organisation of the grant system so that equalisation between communities and the way in which we can protect those that have a low resource base is destroyed, and having lifted central control to 75 per cent. of all local government spending, now propose to lift it to 100 per cent.

When the Rates Act 1984 was debated, statements were made that were similar to those made today by the hon. Member for Spelthorne. The Government spoke about minorities being oppressed by the majority. They talked about people who lived in the high-rated areas of particular authorities having to pay for services voted for by those who did not pay or, according to them, did not pay sufficient into the coffers. They talked about people needing to feel the pain of expenditure on the services that they received. They devised a tax that they claimed, in its early stages, met the criteria that everyone would pay something and that people would feel that they were paying towards the expenditure on the services that they received. The Government went further and called that tax a charge that would be levied on the services delivered to the people who had voted for them.

Today, as at other times, we have reflected on the Prime Minister's decision, announced in October—it was not in the manifesto—that the Government would not allow people to vote for what they believed to be right and that they would not allow them to raise money to spend on services, but that the Government would do a double somersault—described by the current Secretary of State for Education and Science as intellectually unjustifiable—and bring in poll tax capping.

The last vestige of justification in terms of making people pay for what they vote for has now been stripped away. The poll tax capping reveals the Bill for what it is—an attempt to undermine and dismember the whole concept of public services. People will be told that they have one choice only—the choice of the market economy. People can do what they like, say what they like, think what they like, but in the end they will get what the Conservative Government believe is right for them.

Imagine if someone went into a supermarket and chose from the shelves the long-lasting, high-quality, value-for-money goods that they are willing to buy rather than cheaper goods that they saw on the shelves below. Just as they reach the check-out counter, however they hear over the Tannoy the voice of the matron or the sneer of the bully who suddenly steps forward and says, "I'm afraid you may have decided that that is the produce you want, but we have decided otherwise. In this supermarket you buy only the discredited and low-quality goods that we have decided are good for you."

4.45 pm

What sort of society would we be faced with if, instead of announcing that one could not buy the goods that one wanted in that supermarket, there was an announcement over the Tannoy that it was a BUPA market where one could have only the quality of health care that one could buy through private insurance in the private market? Imagine if it was announced over the Tannoy that people had to have private schooling, that people had to have private old people's homes and that the only choice was the private choice of private privilege. That is what is offered in the Bill.

The Bill represents a major dupe of the concept of citizenship and the concept of people choosing freely what they will and are willing to pay for the services that they want for their children, parents or themselves.

We should be concerned not simply with exposing the fact that the poll tax is unfair, unjust and unequal—the House has debated that at length and many Conservative Members have voted with us. We should also expose, once and for all, the idea that the Government believe in diversity and in freedom of choice. We should expose the idea that the Government believe that people have the right to determine for themselves the quality, extent and quantity of goods and services that they wish. That principle has gone out of the window once and for all.

[Mr. David Blunkett]

As the debate is being reported I hope that we can get over to people outside that others have been called irrational, excessive and irresponsible for wishing to vote for decent education, decent care of the old and the disabled. That is the biggest insult that the Government could ever give to the electorate. The electorate will give its answer on 5 May and at the general election.

Poll tax capping should be the final nail that scuppers the flagship and exposes the bilges to the tide of public opinion. That public opinion will sweep us forward to victory and it will demonstrate that the nation rejects the concept and the principle behind the Bill.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Perhaps I could continue the parable told by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). Say a customer goes into a shop and over the Tannoy to which the hon. Gentleman referred he is promised a certain type of goods. Let us say that the manager of that shop then changed the goods without notice and the customer walked out of the shop with totally different goods. That would be an extraordinary state of affairs and one would have thought that, in those circumstances, the customer should be protected.

Let me illustrate what happened in my career. I was a member of the Greater London council and I fought an election in May 1981 against Lord McIntosh. He put forward certain policies and was billed to the electorate of London as a moderate leader. Within 24 hours of his party being elected to power at the GLC, he was booted out by his party and within a year the electorate of London were faced with a 90 per cent. rate rise. Was that fair?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: I will give way to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

Mr. Roberts: If the Prime Minister resigned during this Parliament, would the hon. Gentleman expect there to be a general election rather than for the Conservative party to choose a new leader?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Lord McIntosh was booted out.

Mr. Roberts: Well, what if the Prime Minister were booted out?

Mr. Leigh: That would be completely different. In May 1981, the leader of the opposition on the GLC fought the election on a moderate programme and within 24 hours —not one, two or three years—he was booted out.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to speak in a moment and to put his gloss on the circumstances.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: Very well, I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way for old time's sake, if for no other reason. He knows that Lord McIntosh, as leader of the Labour party in London, fought on an election manifesto that was inherited by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), when he took over as leader of the GLC. There was no argument about policies. It was simply a question of personnel. Let us get it straight. In this case, we are talking about policies, not personnel.

Mr. Leigh: I am very fond of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but he knows perfectly well that the present hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) went round deselecting all of Lord McIntosh's friends. There was internecine war in the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman should ask Lord McIntosh what really happened when the moderates were kicked out of the GLC.

If Opposition Members do not accept that argument, let me put it this way. When I was a member of the GLC, it was under Conservative control and Sir Horace Cutler often had to deal with a Labour Government. The Labour Government at the time insisted that they were the masters of macroeconomic policy. I remember Sir Horace telling a Conservative group meeting that he had just been to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment—the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—for something and had been told that he could not spend the money. Sir Horace abided by the decision because he accepted, as local government has traditionally accepted, that we live in a unitary, not a federal, state and that central Government have the right to lay down macroeconomic targets by which local government must abide.

Although the Bill will ensure that, over time, local authorities will be more accountable to public opinion because of the new, more sensible rate support grant, because of the introduction of the community charge, which many more people will pay, and because of the introduction of the new business rate, we must legislate against a recurrence of what happened with the GLC in May 1981. That is especially true of the transitional period, during which an authority may use the transitional arrangements to impose excessive demands on community charge payers before it becomes truly accountable under the system. The capping power is a reserve power that will be used only rarely, but it is an essential safeguard that the Government must leave in the Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): One can always tell when the Government are short of support: the hon. Members for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) come to their aid. I am never sure whether it advances their cause. Many members of the Government will be horrified to read what the hon. Member for Spelthorne said today. I wrote down this sentence: "Non-co-operation with central Government is in my view the sign of weak local government." He believes that local government must be the lackey, whereas our tradition is that local government is a separate——

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. That is what the hon. Gentleman said and I wrote it down as he said it.

Mr. Wilshire: I did not use the word "lackey".

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman should read *Hansard*. I have quoted what he said.

The amendment shows the hollowness of the Government's argument. Amendments Nos. 157, 158, 159 and 160 deserve our support, and when it comes to the Division in half an hour I and my colleagues will vote for them. I am not so sure about amendments Nos. 161 and 162. They provide that, under poll tax capping, we would retain the system of rate capping, which means that authorities would be capped after the event. I see some logic in intervening in the relevant year rather than the subsequent year. To give an obvious example, my colleagues in Tower Hamlets thought that it was unfair that their rates were capped as a result of decisions taken by the previous Labour administration, which was entirely different politically. I accept the argument for that system being changed.

Instead of listening to the hon. Members for Spelthorne and for Gainsborough and Horncastle I would rather listen to experts whose views on local government are objective, not subjective. When the Minister announced poll tax capping in the autumn, the lead article in the *Local Government Chronicle* said this:

"Poll tax capping an illogical humbug.

Local Government Minister Michael Howard has finally destroyed the Government's argument in favour of community charge. Since the proposal surfaced . . . assorted secretaries of state and ministers have been declaiming whatever technical and financial problems it posed, the community charge had one over-riding merit—it would ensure the accountability of councils by giving every voter a direct stake in financial decisions."

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. Other hon. Members wish to speak and we have only half an hour left.

The system which the Government believe would make local government accountable has been proved to be defective. They must know that in their heart of hearts. The article in the *Local Government Chronicle* concluded:

"To cap community charge smacks of dishonesty and selective vengeance."

That is reminiscent of the debate in 1984 on rate capping, when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said:

"I do not believe that these powers should be given to the Minister."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1984; Vol. 52, c. 188.]

The former Secretary of State for the Environment, now Lord Rippon, said that the Bill which introduced rate capping was "deplorable", raised "major constitutional issues" and was a classic example of "elective dictatorship". When we reach the Division, I guess that it will be the fifth vote during the Report stage of this Bill when some Conservative Members will have the courage of their convictions and will vote against the Government's policy.

The Minister made his case in Committee on 17 March—this deals with one of the points made by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle—when he said:

"Over time, the system"—

that is the poll tax—

"will curb even a council which, ignoring the ultimate electoral consequences, irrationally embarks on a policy of excessive spending to the clear detriment of those whom it claims to serve. But the new system of local finance will not guarantee instantaneous relief from an outbreak of irrational behaviour where, perhaps to prove some kind of distorted political point, an authority decides on excessive spending policies contrary to all reason and to the interests of its electors. In such a situation the public will expect—quite reasonably—that the Government should take some rapid action."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 17 March 1988; c. 1472-3.]

That summarises the Government's patronising, derogatory and nannying attitude to local government. They believe that Whitehall always knows best. The Government realise that they are in trouble because of arguments similar to the one advanced by the Minister that day.

I rephrase the Minister's remarks in this way. Over time, the system of poll tax will curb even a Government who, ignoring the ultimate electoral consequences, irrationally embark on a policy of excessive unfairness to the clear detriment of many of those whom they claim to be helping. The old electoral system does not guarantee instantaneous relief from an outbreak of irrational behaviour where, perhaps to prove some distorted political point, the Government decide upon an absurdly unfair taxation policy contrary to all reason and to the interests of all but their wealthy electors. In such a situation, the public—that is where the debate will go after today—will expect that anyone who can, including Opposition, Government Back-Bench Members and the House of Lords, should take rapid action. We have no doubt that they will. If only we had legislation to cap the Government when they embark upon irrational, excessive policies. [HON. MEMBERS: "Decapitation."] Decapitation is an option, but it is slightly less likely to be produced.

5 pm

There are many other ways forward. The Government's folly is that they have not hearkened to advice from elsewhere. Instead of introducing masses of ever more complex legislation year after year in the search for a system that can be made to work, the Government should perhaps face up to what the *Mail on Sunday* recommended only yesterday and other papers have recommended before. The way to make councils accountable is to change the electoral system and have proportional representation for local government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Conservative Members say "Oh," because it would work, and they know that it would work; the only trouble is that such a system would not necessarily put as many of them into power as the present system. They are concerned not about local government working but about taking local government over.

No doubt the Minister will have seen the *Mail on Sunday* editorial early yesterday morning. As he knows, that paper does not always come out on our side; on the contrary, it often comes out on his. On this occasion, it said:

"The best solution for the Government is to cut its losses and plump, albeit through gritted teeth, for a progressive tax based as much on ability to pay as on demand for services. And if the Government is serious about making local government properly accountable to its electors, it should stop fiddling about with taxes and bring in proportional representation for council elections. Radical, brave politician though she is, has Mrs. Thatcher the courage to do either or, preferably, both?"

We now know that if the poll tax comes in—it is a very big "if"—the Secretary of State will ensure that every poll tax payer receives an at-a-glance guide to council efficiency on the back of his poll tax return to show him how his council compares to councils around the country. What it will not show is what independent studies say will happen under the poll tax. As the Minister knows, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has

[Mr. Hughes]

calculated that if the community charge had been in operation between 1986 and 1988 not one authority in the whole of England would have been able to claim that changes in its spending per adult had been met by comparable changes in its community charge. For 29 authorities, variations in grant in that period would have meant that, even where they had cut their spending, the community charge would have increased. For 21 councils, community charge would have gone down when spending went up. For 228 councils, the community charge would have increased when spending increased, but faster. There will be no direct accountability anywhere. There will be no direct match between what councils spend and the poll tax that they levy. Nevertheless, we are to have capping—on a blanket basis involving the application of uniform principles. That will ensure that, in the end, whatever council is elected and no matter how many electors vote —it could be 100 per cent.—the Government could still say, "We know best."

The poll tax is meant to make local authorities accountable. We should ask, "Accountable for what and accountable to whom?" The Government have made their answer clear. The local authorities will be accountable not to their electors for carrying out the policies for which they have been elected but to central Government for administering central Government policies. If they do not do what central Government want them to do, they will be capped and given directions. For any democrat, the case against poll tax is overwhelming. Sadly, we do not have a Government of democrats.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I note that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) has again stated his objection to rebates and to some of the exemptions included in the Bill. I would not accept any part of his analysis of the Bill, but no doubt he, as an honourable person, will be giving serious consideration to voting against Third Reading, as the Bill includes measures that he interprets as contrary to the principles of accountability.

Given all the pressures and devices in the Bill to force authorities to act within given parameters, it seems strange that we should then have capping. The majority of people may have decided—perhaps very firmly—on a policy that favours services. Under this provision, however, the Government can insist that such a policy is not followed. My hon. Friends the Members for Easington (Mr. Cummings) and for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) were here earlier. In their constituencies, there is vast support among working people for the provision of services. Even if 75 or 80 per cent. of the electorate vote in local government elections in favour of spending their own money collectively to provide services and do things that they could not do individually, they will be stopped by diktat of a Government who can claim only 42 per cent. of the votes. That is an obscenity.

Some Conservative Members argue in favour of the Bill for the one simple reason that the proposal was included in their manifesto and that they must therefore stick with it solidly. I do not accept that argument. I ask them to consider what the manifesto said about the poll tax:

"We will reform local government finance to strengthen local democracy and accountability."

The accountability argument has already gone out of the window over the question of joint and several liability. It goes out of the window entirely in the light of the poll tax capping provisions. Whatever local authorities decide to spend to provide services, they will be prevented from doing so. A local authority cannot be made accountable by being made to spend more money but only by being made to spend less.

The manifesto continues:

"Local electors must be able to decide the level of service they want and how much they are prepared to pay for it."

The poll tax capping runs contrary to the manifesto commitment, which says that the local electorate must determine what services it wants and how much it is prepared to pay. I hope that those Conservative Members who stick with the rather simple notion that because the proposal appeared in the manifesto they must go along with it will take that on board, because we may then have some chance to do something about this obnoxious provision.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wrote down what I said and then twisted it. I have written down what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said about manifestos, and I am anxious to check that I got it right. Was he saying that he does not go along with the idea of sticking with a manifesto?

Mr. Barnes: What is a manifesto? A manifesto commitment means something if it has been fully and fearlessly discussed by the electorate—if it has been put in front of them so that they can make a solid decision about it. In the last election, that did not happen with the poll tax, except in Scotland, where the proposal was solidly rejected. I accept that, all other things being equal, hon. Members are committed to their manifesto proposals, but all other things are not equal in this case. The poll tax was not a major subject of discussion at the last election and other issues and values are at stake. Democracy depends not just on a document on which people have voted but on feelings, understandings, pressures and democratic pluralism in society.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): If the hon. Gentleman will not commit himself to what is, I suppose, in his manifesto, would he commit himself to Labour party conference resolutions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We must not stray into manifestos. The hon. Gentleman is getting somewhat wide of the amendment. I am sure that he will address himself to the amendment.

Mr. Barnes: I shall return to the main attack.

On Thursday we discussed contingency funding and grant provisions, and from the debate it was quite clear that the contingency fund provisions are not adequate. Problems have emerged about emergency expenditure and Parliament recently applied the Bellwin rules to expenditure on gale damage. That type of expenditure still requires local government money. The legislation will increasingly require the full amount to be met out of the poll tax provision rather than out of the unified business rate or from the grant provided by central Government.

That situation will be made excessively worse by the introduction of poll tax capping. When an emergency arises, an authority will have to spend money out of the

poll tax provisions to meet it, but will then be capped. The only way in which it will be able to meet its commitments in an emergency will be by further cutting the services and provisions in its area. The Minister needs to answer that point.

Mr. Tony Banks: I support the amendment. It is quite clear that this part of the Bill exposes the total hypocrisy of the Government. They have introduced the poll tax because they say that they want to make services more closely accountable to the electorate; then they come up with the proposal about poll tax capping.

The Government want to set up a system of local government finance that creates maximum pressure for the reduction of local council services, and they have done that in three stages. First, they have created a penal and unfair tax system that puts caring councils in the difficult position of having to impose the tax or cut services. Secondly, the tax gives a financial incentive to people in need of local services to vote against them. Thirdly, via poll tax capping, the Government give themselves the power to impose service cuts on councils and electorates that have not been bullied into making cuts themselves.

It is clear from the Government's proposed poll tax capping that they want to leave nothing to chance. The Government are not interested in local democracy because, ultimately, they do not trust the local electorate, believing that their judgments are preferable to those of local people elected to take the decisions. The Secretary of State has already given us his vision of what local authorities will be. He has said that they should meet once a year and should sit down and discuss the way that all the contracts for services are to be given to private companies.

Then, in the words of the Secretary of State, the councils will retire and have a good long lunch. The Secretary of State knows all about good long lunches. I notice from the latest figures that the Department of the Environment spent £66,000 on official hospitality last year. Perhaps that is what the Secretary of State thinks local authorities should do.

As I have said, this part of the Bill exposes the total hypocrisy of the Government. It will make the already difficult task of local authority treasurers in drawing up their budgets that much more difficult.

5.15 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I shall be brief. I think that it is generally accepted that central Government are responsible for macroeconomic policy. However, there may be disputes in central Government about the efficacy of some aspects of macroeconomic policy. We have heard of a dispute between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the exchange rate. In the light of difficult decisions, that is perfectly understandable. It should not be in dispute that, if the Government are producing a poll tax in order to advance accountability, hon. Members and the electorate should be entitled to take them at their word.

In a speech on 19 March, the Secretary of State for the Environment uttered some graphic words. He said:

"One Labour pressure group described the Community Charge as 'a straightforward attempt to create conditions for taxpayers'revolts against council spending plans.'"

I have no doubt that some Conservative Members would say, "Hear, hear" to that. The Secretary of State went on:

"They've got it in one! Councils who are efficient and frugal have nothing to fear. But with Community Charge figures in some areas of £500-£600, of course local people will rebel. They will rebel against profligacy and inefficiency and throw the guilty councillors out.

The weapon of democratic accountability is a very powerful one for us Conservatives: use it. The message is: if you want a lower Community Charge—vote for it, and vote Conservative."

What happens if people do not obey the Secretary of State? The answer is that the Government will need back-up powers. Such powers are in the Bill and in the Scottish Act because the Government are fearful of democratic choice. They ought to come clean about that. Accountability is not written in concrete. It will vary. People may have a different view of the need over a five-year Parliament.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Douglas: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I intend to be brief because my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) wants to wind up.

If the Government alone are to decide, then let us have all the elections on one day and have the matter determined for 10 years so that the Prime Minister can continue to make her way through the parliamentary and economic process. Flexibility and democratic choice mean that people will have differing views of what is needed in different areas. We must have regard to other areas of power and of feeling within the system. That is truly what the Tories fear.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): The debate on these powers has largely been a re-run of the debate in Standing Committee. There have been one or two changes in the cast, but on the whole we have heard similar arguments. We are delighted to see back with us after his illness the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). Quite clearly his illness has done nothing to dull his appetite for controversy. I think that he was the only speaker to advance the arguments beyond those that were put in Committee. He introduced to the debate the metaphor of the supermarket which, as far as I can recall, played no part in the previous proceedings on the Bill. I was delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman make use of that metaphor because it shows that all that we have been saying about the importance of value for money in the provision of local government services is at last getting home to the Opposition.

I do not think that the analogy was quite as compelling as the hon. Gentleman seemed to think it was. Of course, the relationship between the customer in the supermarket and the supermarket owner is not quite as unbridled as the hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest. Transactions in the supermarket are always subject to the intervention of the trading standards officer, although I have to concede that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State probably does not often think of himself as a glorified trading standards officer.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Minister accept that if we have poll tax capping it is unlikely that the trading standards officer will any longer exist?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept that anything of the kind is likely to happen.

One of the newcomers to the debate, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), raised a

[Mr. Howard]

point on the basis of some of the calculations by CIPFA. The hon. Gentleman should know that those calculations are based on a projection of the existing grants system and include, among other features of the existing grants system, the penalty system, which, of course, will not be part of the new regime. If such calculations are based on the existing grants system, it is not surprising that the results lead to anomalies.

We recognise that the existing grants system has instabilities that would lead to such results. That is one of the reasons why we think it important not to have that feature in the new grants system, but to have in its place a much more stable grants system that will enable people to assess to a greater and more effective extent the performance of their local authorities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister cannot confirm to the House that there is any certainty or objective agreement that the new system will produce for each local authority in England a commensurate rise in poll tax with a rise in spending and a decrease in the poll tax with a decrease in spending. There is no guarantee that that would follow from this legislation.

Mr. Howard: We are certainly objective. We intend to produce a given figure for a standard level of service, which will provide a ready reckoner on the basis of which people will be able to understand whether they are getting value for money.

We have made it clear on more than one occasion that we see the capping power introduced in the clause as a reserve measure. It is not a measure to be used as a matter of course or in the circumstances referred to by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). The people of an area certainly will be able to vote for a relatively high-spending authority if they so choose. Because of the greater accountability which the new system will introduce, all the people of the area will be paying towards the cost of the spending of that authority and no doubt they will take that into account.

Nevertheless, there is a need for a reserve power to deal with the circumstances referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). There is a particular need for a reserve power during the transitional period in those areas where there will be a dual system running, with a combination of the rating system and the community charge and where accountability will not be as clear as we should like it to be when the system is fully in force. It is important that there should be such a reserve power—rarely, if ever used we hope—to protect the charge payers of an area against extreme cases of extravagant and irresponsible local authorities.

All the evidence shows that, when the Government have intervened to extend such protection to ratepayers under the existing system, that protection has been welcomed by the people who live in the local authority areas concerned. We saw some of the results of that protection to the residents of Ealing during the election last year.

Mr. Blunkett: How would the Minister respond to the fact that within three months of rate capping being levied in the city of Sheffield the Conservatives lost two seats in an area that they had previously held for 60 years? Is he aware that such a swing would ensure that if the hon. Member of Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) were standing for election on 5 May he would lose his seat on Sheffield city council?

Mr. Howard: We have to consider all the evidence. I do not suggest that it applies universally in all cases, but the evidence of the way in which people voted at the general election, when they had to decide between a Government who were prepared to extend that protection and a Government such as that who would be provided by the Labour party, which would abdicate all responsibility in those matters, shows that people have tended to vote, when they have had a real choice in those matters, for the party that would extend that protection.

The Labour party promised in its manifesto that it would no longer afford such protection and that it would let local authorities spend to their hearts' content. That is an extremely irresponsible attitude and an abdication of responsibility in an important area in which central Government have a role and should continue to have a role. Because we recognise the responsibilities of central Government to extend protection in those extreme circumstances in which it is necessary to intervene on behalf of local people we wish to keep a capping power in the legislation.

Mr. Rooker: The one thing which the clause reveals is the Government's total lack of confidence in their own legislation. I have faced incredulity when I have explained to people as honestly as I can—I have never been accused of not telling the truth about the Government's legislation—that twice as many people would be involved in direct payment, and that the Government's reason is that those people have the vote and that more people will be forced to vote because they will get a bill. Part of the theory is that people will have to pay for the consequences of the vote.

I have explained all that, and I have then reminded people that when they have voted, knowing what the poll tax will be because the budget will be fixed before the election, and the party which wins has a higher poll tax perhaps because it wanted to spend more on nursery education—or, in county council areas, on introducing concessionary bus passes for old age pensioners—once the election is out of the way the Government can say, "Hang on. You have won the election and you were honest about the poll tax, but we do not like your poll tax and we are ging to use section 104 of the poll tax legislation to change it retrospectively." People just do not believe me when I tell them that, because it contradicts all that Minister have said about accountability and democracy. The arguments about universal accountability go straight out of the window.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: No. The hon. Gentleman voted for the guillotine. We are to have a vote shortly.

The clause shows the Government's lack of confidence in their own legislation. If they were to replace the clause, they could get around the problem that they do not trust the electorate. In London and in the shires councils are elected for four years and they do not have to face their electorates annually. The answer is to replace the clause with annual elections. We would vote for that. There would not need to be a vote, as no hon. Member would

oppose such a measure. The Government could have on the nod a Bill for annual local elections all over the country.

That is Labour party policy. We have demanded it in the House and in Committee and we have published Bills, yet the Government are scared stiff to promote legislation for annual local elections. They would not even come to the House to force annual elections in metropolitan districts of the great cities such as Sheffield and Birmingham where in 1988-89 there is a gap because of the abolition of the metropolitan councils. We want that gap closed and we want annual elections in those areas and for every local authority. That is the way to bring about accountability and democracy in local government, instead of undermining those on both sides of the political divide who go into public life to serve their fellow citizens.

What self-respecting person will go into local government knowing that all his decisions will affect only one quarter of local government expenditure after the Bill instead of one half before the Bill? Why should they bother when they know that, even for a quarter of local government spending, even if they fight an election and win, the Government can say, "We don't like your budget. Here is a new budget." They can do that not only in May or June after the election but in any month during the financial year. They can even come back the following January and retrospectively change the local authority budget for that year.

That is absolutely outrageous. It has nothing to do with democracy or accountability. It has everything to do with Whitehall Ministers saying that they know best and absolutely nothing to do with the arguments that they put forward. It is against that background that we are opposing this clause root and branch.

Local authorities are not, in the words of the Minister, spending any old money that they can get their hands on. They are spending money that they have raised, not Whitehall money. They put their budgets before the electorates and they won their elections on that basis. The Minister's argument that they have freedom to spend what they like is incorrect. Each one has to raise the money in advance of the elections, with a budget. That is honest and democratic. It is what accountability is about.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 314.

Division No. 273] **[5.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*

Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llyn Golding and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, R Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis

Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after half-past Five o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Orders [22 February and 13 April] and the Resolution [18 April], to put forthwith the Questions on amendments moved by a member of the Government, of which notice had been given, to the end of clause 114.*

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 57, line 29, at end insert 'and'.

No. 29, in page 57, line 30, leave out from 'Authority' to end of line 31.

No. 30, in page 58, line 2, at end insert 'and'.

No. 31, in page 58, line 3, leave out from 'authorities' to end of line 4.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Clause 117

QUALIFICATIONS OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Amendments made: No. 70, in page 65, line 19, at end insert—

'(ee) the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, and'.

No. 71, in page 65, line 22, leave out from 'section' to end of line 23.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Clause 122

STATUTORY REFERENCES TO RATING

Mr. Rooker: I beg to move amendment No. 223, in page 68, line 18, at end insert—

'( ) In subsection 4 of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, for the words from "the product of a rate of 2p in the pound" to the end of the subsection there shall be substituted the following words—

"(a) £4 per inhabitant of the area, except those mentioned in subsections (b) and (c) below;

(b) £8 per inhabitant in the metropolitan counties;

(c) such a sum, not less than £8, as the Secretary of State shall by order prescribe for Greater London; or

(d) such other higher amounts as the Secretary of State may by order provide."'.

Under the constraints of the guillotine, it is the agreed intention to spend only a few minutes on amendment No. 223 before we move to the major item under the guillotine relating to the Scottish business.

Amendment No. 223 is a further probe in respect of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. Effectively, that means discussing the issue of what we all understand to be the product of a penny rate. Local authorities can use the product of a penny rate for a variety of matters outside the normal remit of the legislation.

Obviously the product of a penny rate will have no significance once rateable values have disappeared and the poll tax is introduced. Therefore, amendment No. 223 refers to pounds per inhabitant of an area, whether they be in the metropolitan counties or the Greater London area. We really only want to press the Minister to discover whether the Government have given the matter any more thought. In Committee the Government implied that they did not intend to abolish the concept completely, but obviously the product of the rate poundage would have no significance in future.

The issue is essentially important because local government uses section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 in three ways. First, it is used for job creation. I understand that about 75 per cent. of section 137 money is used for economic development issues of various kinds. I do not have the time to go into that in detail.

Secondly, section 137 money is used to fund and assist the voluntary sector. That includes grants to citizens' advice bureaux, law centres and other bodies not covered by mainstream funding. That includes voluntary groups working on issues not related directly to the responsibility of local authorities, for example, local voluntary groups opposing projects—although I have never heard of a local voluntary group "proposing" such projects—such as the siting of a new airport or nuclear power station. Those groups may want to put a case at a public inquiry or lead a campaign.

Airport construction and nuclear power generation are not local government issues. However, it is possible for local authorities to assist voluntary groups in work related to those issues which are of crucial importance to the local communities.

5.45 pm

Thirdly, section 137 money is used valuably where one tier of local authority funds a voluntary group related to another tier of local government. I refer to the examples given in Committee in which a district council would fund work relating to social services or education projects. A district council in the shire areas would not deal with those matters because that would be a county council function.

Section 137 money is not a great deal of money in terms of local government expenditure. However, it gives discretion and a degree of flexibility. It enables parts of local government to help and cope with the unexpected. It assists innovation and variety at local government level. I sincerely hope that the Government will not try to impose a complete block on those aspects of local government. I hope that the Government will consider or accept amendment No. 223—if they do accept it, I would probably fall through the floor—because it would meet the thrust of the arguments. Indeed, both sides of the Committee shared an understanding of the arguments on these points.

I hope that the Minister will not say that the Government will leave this matter to another place. If Ministers are to be believed about the other place, the other place will not be able to touch the Bill as it relates to money. Therefore, the other place will not be able to cope with the replacement of section 137 effectively. Therefore, we must deal with section 137 in this House.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I support the amendment and the arguments put by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). I remember the old days when we debated this matter in other Committees, on other Bills, in years past. The issue is the same. I have read what the Minister said in Committee.

The issue remains that local authorities should be given a greater amount of discretionary power within a small limit to raise the spend on things that they regard to be important locally. The hon. Member for Perry Barr

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

referred to citizens' advice bureaux. I visited Warwickshire a year or so ago. Warwickshire county was very keen to fund the increasingly important network of citizens' advice bureaux. It is the voluntary sector and voluntary services which most need the expansion of the tuppenny rate, as it is coloquially called.

The argument across the Floor of the House has concerned how much discretion local authorities should have. The Minister will know that some local authorities have reached their ceiling and are already committed. There are some good voluntary sector agencies whose requests have been turned down because there is no capacity to grant-fund them. The Minister will know also that the argument that extra money will be used only to fund lunatic and fringe activities is not supported by any evidence and that 67 per cent. of the total of section 137 money has been used for promoting economic development and employment. A substantial percentage was for legal, advisory and other welfare services.

All the indications are that one of the key areas that will need help if poll tax is to be enacted is that of money advice. With the increasing amount of debt that there is and the growing volume of difficulties into which people get, the services of the voluntary sector in particular will be needed in respect of consumer advice and financial counselling. Those are just examples of where discretionary powers will be necessary in local government.

The Minister has said that the Government will answer questions on that aspect when they know the result of the Widdicombe report. That report was promised early this year and is now overdue, and I should like to know when we shall be receiving it. If we had that information, I would be half happy. If we had that information plus a commitment either to accept this amendment or something similar, for one brief moment during the passage of this Bill there might even be some smiles on the Opposition Benches. I hope that the Minister will take this rare opportunity to find favour at a time when it seems that he and his colleagues on the Front Bench are increasingly unpopular and isolated, even among their own supporters.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): This amendment is unnecessary. It is not necessary to pass an amendment either in this House or in another place because the present basis of section 137 limits can continue until the introduction of the community charge. Following upon that, clause 122 will allow the Secretary of State to make regulations to change the reference in section 137 to the product of 2p in the pound to some other factor, as appropriate.

I have nothing to add to what was said by my hon. and learned Friend about the future of section 137 when we discussed the matter in Committee. He said then that the Government would announce their views in the light of the Widdicombe proposals and recommendations. I hope that it will not be too long before those announcements are made. When they are, we can discuss alongside section 137 powers the specific issue of local authority development activity and the other pertinent points raised during this short debate. I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I would rather speak when my hon. Friend has finished.

Mr. Chope: In that case, it might be better if I conclude my remarks at this point and ask the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Cash: This amendment deals with a clause in the Bill that refers to statutory references to rating. It raises an important question relating to my own constituency of Stafford, with particular reference to an area named Knighton, which is governed by an Act of Parliament passed in 1660, when Charles II was on the throne.

The significance of that provision, in referring the application of section 137 in the context of clause 122, is this. Under the terms of the 1660 Act, residents of Knighton are not liable to rates, taxes, assessments or charges, whether passed by Acts of Parliament or otherwise. Furthermore, that provision was granted in good faith in 1660, in recognition of services rendered by the local inhabitants to Charles II.

It so happens that in 1927 Gnosall rural district council itself continued that exemption under the then Rating and Valuation Act 1925. Furthermore, and with specific reference to the General Rate Act 1967, to which reference is made in the statute in question, section 117 further continues the exemption for those constituents of mine. They comprise 31 occupiers, a pub, and a smithy. The pub is known as the Haberdasher's Arms. There is also a factory, together with——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman repeat that name?

Mr. Cash: The pub is known as the Haberdasher's Arms, in the parish of Knighton.

Mr. Foulkes: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman —I must make a visit there.

Mr. Cash: Since 1660, its inhabitants have been under no obligation to pay rates. I appreciate that we are under the guillotine, so I shall bring my remarks to a swift conclusion. It would be most unfortunate if the Henry VIII clause, normally used to revoke, amend or repeal an Act, should be used in this instance to remove an exemption that was granted in such express terms in 1660. I look to the Minister to continue the exemption for my constituents on the grounds that it was made in good faith and has been continued on numerous subsequent occasions. I ask my hon. Friend, when he replies, to give the assurance that I seek.

Mr. Rooker: With the leave of the House, we accept the Minister's reply as far as it goes, but I recommend that all right hon. and hon. Members find time to read amendment No. 237, which relates to the speech that we have just heard and to the bunch of free-loaders in the constituency of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) who do not pay any rates. How do they benefit from the product of the tuppenny rate anyway, under section 137, if they are not paying rates? There is a point to be made here about accountability and democracy, but I shall not make it now —otherwise I shall have my hon. Friends from Scotland down on me like a ton of bricks. I take it as being implicit in the Minister's reply that the same amount of money will be available under some equivalent form of procedure

when the poll tax is introduced as currently exists under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. That being the case, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 123

RATE SUPPORT GRANT: ABOLITION

Amendment made: No. 46, in page 68, line 41, leave out 'as a simple contract debt'.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Clause 127

RATES LEVIED FOR CERTAIN YEARS

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move amendment No. 78, in page 70, line 15, after second 'by', insert

'or determined in accordance with'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 79, 80, 75, 91 to 95, 95A, 96, 97, 76 and 77.

Mr. Lang: Most of the amendments in this group relate to registration issues, and, like the other Scottish amendments to the Bill, they fall into three broad categories. Some bring provisions in the Scottish Act into line with the equivalent provisions for England and Wales; some make minor and technical changes to the 1987 Act; and a few introduce new provisions.

Of the amendments in this group, two fall into the first category; that is, they bring the Scottish provisions into line with the equivalent English provisions. Amendment No. 95A gives registration officers power to make inquiries of individuals who are, have been or are about to be resident in their area.

6 pm

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister talked about bringing the Scottish provision into line with the English provision. Can he explain why he is still persisting with the requirement to include the date of birth in registration? A number of people have objected to it recently, for a variety of reasons, and I can find no explanation for its inclusion. Why is the date of birth needed in Scotland but not in England? This is causing considerable offence, not least to my mother.

Mr. Lang: I am sorry about the circumstances of the hon. Gentleman's mother. However, I think that if I were to argue that all the Scottish provisions should shadow the English provisions exactly, the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends would be the first to complain.

The provision about dates of birth was pressed on the Government by local government practitioners in Scotland to enable them the better to identify——

Mr. Douglas: Name one.

Mr. Lang: I can name one: the Rating and Valuation Association pressed it on the Government very strongly. It was thought to be a better way of identifying people, and after considering the matter the Government decided to agree.

Mr. Foulkes: Why is that greater means of identification necessary in Scotland, but not in England? Are there more people with the same name in Scotland? I would have thought that it might be more important to apply the provision in Wales, in view of all the Evan-Joneses and others of the same name. So far, the Minister has failed to explain that.

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, my responsibilities in the context of the amendments relate to the Scottish provisions. I can only assume that my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent English constituencies and who are Ministers at the Department of the Environment have not come under the same pressure from local government practitioners.

Amendment No. 95A gives registration officers power to make inquiries of individuals who are, have been or are about to be resident in their area. At present, the basic source of information for registration officers is the canvass of responsible persons. It is clear, however, that at a certain stage in the canvass process, registration officers may wish to seek information direct from individuals—for example, those who claim to be students or to be exempt—and the amendment gives them power to do so. As the power will relate to identifiable individuals, it will not supplant the general canvass process but will be a useful supplement to it. A similar power is contained in paragraph 10 of schedule 2 as respects England and Wales.

Amendment No. 96 also falls—or at least partly falls—into this category. Among the amendments it makes to section 20 of the 1987 Act is an amendment to allow the Secretary of State to prescribe other persons who will be entitled to inspect the register. This power will be used to allow auditors to inspect the register in line with the equivalent provision for England and Wales. Amendment No. 96 also amends the part of section 20 which requires regional and islands councils to sell copies of the public part of the register.

A number of interests have objected to this requirement and have suggested that, if it is retained, provision should be made to allow individuals to request the removal of their name. Amendment No. 96 therefore replaces the relevant part of section 20 with a provision empowering the Secretary of State to make regulations providing whether, and on what terms, the public part of the register may be sold. It brings section 20 into line with the corresponding provision for England and Wales in paragraph 18 of schedule 2 to the Bill.

Three of the amendments in the group introduce what are effectively new provisions. Amendment No. 91 amends section 13 of the 1987 Act to make it clear that the register should not be divided into three parts, relating to the personal, standard and collective community charges respectively. If the register were organised in this way it would, at least arguably, feed through into the public part of the register and would thus completely negate our intention that it should not be possible to identify second homes from the register. A separate part would also make it easier to identify women's refuges, undermining the anonymity that we intend to achieve for them.

Amendment No. 93 amends section 15 of the 1987 Act to overcome difficulties which might otherwise arise in the case of deaths. As that section stands, registration officers are required to notify persons whose register entry is changed or deleted using a form prescribed for that purpose. The form addresses the registered person in the second person singular, and it would clearly be unfortunate if such forms were sent out bearing the names

[Mr. Lang]

of people who have died. Amendment No. 93 therefore amends section 15 to provide that in such circumstances the notification should be sent to the deceased's executors.

The last amendment in this category is amendment No. 95. It inserts into section 18 of the 1987 Act a new subsection, which provides that when a person dies his executors must notify the registration officer of the date of the death within one month. This will help to ensure that the register is kept up to date.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Can the Minister estimate how many registration forms have been sent out to deceased people in Scotland over the past month, naming them as responsible people?

Mr. Lang: No; I am sorry. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the registration process has just started. Although in some regions it is quite well advanced and is proceeding smoothly, in others some of the information is not yet available.

Amendment No. 95 is unlikely to impose any additional burden on executors, as they will no doubt wish in any case to seek confirmation that there is no outstanding liability for the community charge in respect of the deceased.

Mr. Douglas: Do the Government intend to introduce any penalties for failure to inform the registration officer that a person is deceased?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the 1987 Act already makes provision for a civil penalty of £50 in the first instance and £200 in the second.

The other amendments in the group are all essentially minor and technical, and raise no issues of substance.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that we have a truncated debate, and I do not wish to detain any hon. Member who wishes to take part, but the Government have tabled a plethora of amendments. Surely it is an insult to the House to guillotine the debate. Does the Minister intend to say anything about Government amendment No. 84 which introduces substantial changes to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has quite understood. We are discussing the group of amendments being taken with Government amendment No. 78. Government amendment No. 84 will come later, if there is time. It cannot be discussed with this group of amendments.

Mr. Douglas: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Substantial changes are being made under a guillotine. I shall respect your ruling. However, the thrust of the amendments relates not to the 1987 Act but to the 1973 Act. Is the Minister not going to say anything in defence of his amendment?

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has made a very good point. This is a very short debate to cover many Government amendments that are both technical and important. I think that it would have been more sensible if the Minister had taken some time at least to say a word or two about the other amendments—as we must finish the debate by 7.30 pm—or even for the amendments all to have been grouped together, so that we could have talked about all of them. Some of the others are also important, but there will be no time to debate them all.

I intend to keep my remarks relatively brief, because I am well aware of the shortness of time, and we want to get through as much as possible. I do not know about the Minister, but I spent considerable time during the past weeks canvassing in my constituency. *[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) never does that, but I do. I have found, on doorstep after doorstep, people who voted Tory even as late as June last year saying, "I shall never vote for that woman again." The major cause of that is, of course, the poll tax. Our canvass returns in Cathcart show Labour support 6 per cent. higher than it was in June last year, when the majority was increased from 4,000 to 11,000. That is why the Government are doing so badly. I say to English Conservative Members loud and clear: if they want to experience the same thing as their Scottish colleagues did in June last year, let them continue to vote for this legislation.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Has my hon. Friend seen the report in the *Galloway Gazette and Stranraer-News*?

Mr. Maxton: I should be delighted to read it, if my hon. Friend lets me have a copy.

The Minister and I both spoke at the rating and valuation conference in Dunblane last Friday. He did not impress the experts, the people who must put the system into practice, by arriving at 11.30, speaking for 20 minutes and leaving to do a press conference. He did not answer a single question that the experts wanted to ask. Those experts said loud and clear to me that they will keep all their valuation rolls for domestic properties because their view is that the tax will collapse in a matter of years and the Government will have to return to the rating system.

Mr. Salmond: Did any one of those experts suggest to the hon. Gentleman in those discussions that the information on the date of birth was necessary for the community charge register?

Mr. Maxton: None of them did. Equally, every single one was opposed to the concept of a non-payment campaign.

One thing which the Minister said, which is important in regard to the amendments, was:

> "It is our clear intention that no change made to the Bill should prejudice the timetable for the introduction of the new system in Scotland."

When the hon. Gentleman spoke to the press later, he said:

> "Our legislation is through. It would not upset the timetable for Scotland. The driving force is to abolish the discredited and grossly unfair rating system and we are determined to bring early relief to domestic ratepayers in Scotland. That is what the change is all about."

That is a major shift in Scottish Office thinking. Until now, the Secretary of State has made it abundantly clear that if there are any major changes in the English legislation, inevitably it will mean the holding back or withdrawal and repeal of the Scottish legislation. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh yes. That is what the Secretary of State has said time and again.

Mr. Lang: To help the hon. Gentleman along, the question was not about change; it was about delay.

Mr. Maxton: That is not what the Minister is quoted as saying. He said:

"It is our clear intention that no change made to the Bill should prejudice the timetable".

That is astonishing. Are they saying that if the Bill is defeated on Third Reading tonight—it may be a remote possibility, but it is not impossible—the Scottish Act will go ahead? If the other place amends the Bill, as the House came close to doing on Monday last week, will the Government say that they will still press ahead with the Scottish legislation, despite such a major change in the English Bill? If so, that is a direct contradiction and a major shift in the view of the Scottish Office and its Ministers.

The amendments are about registration. As the registration process is taking place in Scotland, chaos is developing. Repressive measures are having to be used —I say that advisedly—by registration officers to try to get the information. Jack Woods, the registration officer for Strathclyde, made it clear that he had to use postcards giving people three days to return the information because, if he did not, it would have been impossible to obtain the information in time to complete the register by October this year. He is having to use means which, if legal, are not strictly within the spirit of how the process should be carried out.

The amendments try to tighten up further the registration procedure, to try to make sure, if at all possible, that nobody dodges the tax.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *indicated assent.*

6.15 pm

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman nods. Every time that is done, the expense increases and the return decreases because every time one pushes up the expense of registration one gets a smaller return.

Many people in Strathclyde are returning their forms, not just because we are asking them to and saying that that is what they should do. My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) referred to the date of birth. Many people ask why on earth they should give that information and why they should provide information that is not required under the English Bill. What absolute guarantee can the Minister give that the information of the date of birth will be kept secret and not be made available to a much wider public? We must deal with the registration procedure.

The amendments are bizarre and threatening. For example, amendment No. 95 deals with what happens when someone dies. That is right. It is amazing that when we went through the Committee on the Scottish Bill Ministers forgot that people died. Ministers did not remember that and did nothing about it.

Mr. Lang: Did the hon. Gentleman raise the matter?

Mr. Maxton: It was not my responsibility to ensure that the Bill was correct. It was the hon. Gentleman's responsibility. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am sorry, I take that back. Of course, it was not the Minister's direct responsibility; it was the responsibility of one Michael Ancram, who pushed the Bill through. We all know what happened to him.

It is important to know whether there will be penalties if the executor does not inform the registration officer that someone has died. In my constituency, for example, a husband who has been unemployed for the past 20 years may die. The couple may have no property except the contents of the House. An executor will not be appointed. The widow is left with the responsibility to ensure that arrangements are made—an executor will not do it. It is she who has to arrange the funeral and go through all the procedures; she will be the executor in fact, if not in law. Will she have to return the forms and make sure that she sends back the information within a month? If she does not, will she suffer a £50 fine, on top of all the other things that she is suffering? That would be absurd.

Through the amendments, the Government are seeking further information. It is not clear from the amendments whether this is the case, but the Minister said at Dunblane that under the new system DHSS payments are now subject to court orders and local authorities will be able to seek deductions from DHSS payments. The Minister also said that the DHSS will be able to provide information to registration officers. If someone seeks income support, he will be given a form to claim a rebate on his poll tax, but he will be informed that if he does not send in the form the DHSS will inform the registration officer accordingly. That is a breach of the commitment given by Michael Ancram in the Committee on the Scottish Bill, that DHSS records would not be available for the registration process. He said that time and again in Committee. We have yet another breach of the rules as Ministers realise that they are having more problems with the tax and that they are in difficulties.

Visiting service men are now to be exempt. I do not know what that will mean in Argyll. I do not know how much American service men living in Dunoon pay in rates on houses that they rent or own. If they rent or own their houses, presumably they pay rates. Now they are to be exempt. I assume that if the service man is married to a Scots girl she will be exempt too. As I understand it, a spouse will be exempt as well. That makes some sense, but there is something obscence about well-paid American service men and well-paid diplomats living in Scotland —I do not know whether the consuls are in the same position—being exempt from the poll tax when the Government intend to impose the tax upon the mildly mentally handicapped, the severely physically handicapped, the old, the unemployed, the ill and the sick.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Does my hon. Friend recall the notorious Mr. Michael Ancram seeking to rebut the suggestion that in reality the community charge would be a poll tax by arguing that those not entitled to vote would not have to pay tax? We now see the Government seeking to exempt a large group of foreigners who are not able to vote but should have to pay the tax.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend is right. The Government are making nonsense of the argument that the tax is about ensuring that anyone who makes use of local services should pay something towards them. An American service man living in Dunoon will make use of local services, perhaps the full range of such services. However, he will not have to pay the poll tax. The Government are in a considerable mess.

[Mr. Maxton]

I shall quote what the Secretary of State for the Environment said about the unified business rate on Thursday of last week. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) raised the matter in the same debate. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"Scotland will move towards a unified business rate at the English rate poundage after rateable values have been harmonised. No changes to the Bill are proposed, because it is unclear how fast harmonisation can proceed."—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 1026.]

As I understand it, we do not have any legislation for the introduction of a uniform business rate in Scotland. Perhaps some of the technical amendments before us will make the necessary legislative provision. I should think that separate legislation will be required. Is the Secretary of State for the Environment telling us something that we in Scotland do not know, or is he just plain ignorant?

Mr. Douglas: My hon. Friend is making a valuable point, but what the Secretary of State said to me was much more specific:

"The idea is that the rateable value bases of the two countries should be brought entirely in line as soon as possible so that there is no distortion between arrangements in England and Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 1025.]

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend reinforces my argument. I do not think that the Scottish Office is aware of the problem. If it is, it is clearly abrogating its responsibility to deal with Scottish legislation and Scottish local government. It seems that it is happy to hand over its responsibilities to the Department of the Environment.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman in a small way. There may be other changes that will require legislation but that will not be necessary when it comes to valuation practice. The hon. Gentleman may not realise that the Inland Revenue has different practices for the decapitalisation rate for different types of hereditament. It is that area in which harmonisation is required, where valuation opinion is involved. That would be likely to benefit Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: Now that the hon. Gentleman has resumed his place, I shall inform him of his ignorance. Valuations in Scotland are not carried out by the Inland Revenue. Separate legislation would be required to make properties in Scotland liable to valuation by the Inland Revenue. We need to know from the Minister exactly what is going on.

The poll tax is obscene and it is not wanted in Scotland. The time has come for the Government to withdraw their proposals, even for their own political good. If they fail to withdraw the legislation that will apply in Scotland, there will be no Conservative Members representing seats in Scotland after the next general election.

Mr. Bill Walker: The comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) about the anomalies in the valuations of non-domestic properties in Scotland are interesting and astonishing. He must know that hon. Members on both sides of the House have introduced private Members' Bills to eradicate anomalies between the Scottish and English valuation systems. Caravans and reed beds, for example, may ring some bells for the hon. Gentleman. The bringing into line of the two rating and valuation systems is long overdue. The distortions have worked substantially to Scotland's disadvantage, and that is something we should never forget.

The hon. Member for Cathcart talked about visiting service men and I expect that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will take up his remarks. I understand that the hon. Gentleman was referring to visiting service men who take up rented accommodation. The owners of such properties will have to register them under the legislation. That applies also to second homes, for example. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that visiting service men should not broaden our elections. I hope also that he will agree that service men should make their contribution, as they have in the past. Military bases have had their own system for ensuring that that happens.

The hon. Member for Cathcart told us that he has been canvassing in his constituency. It will come as no surprise to him that he is not the only one who has chosen to go out knocking on doors. He is not the only one who has been canvassing.

Mr. Foulkes: That explains why the hon. Gentleman is wearing dark glasses.

Mr. Maxton: What happened?

Mr. Walker: I happened to suffer some injuries to my eyes over the weekend. I find that the more sensitive hon. Members are sympathetic to anyone with such problems. The less sympathetic and understanding usually find it amusing when someone suffers such injuries. I leave Labour Members to decide which cap fits them.

The hon. Member for Cathcart has told us that he has done some canvassing. As I have said, I have been canvassing in my constituency. Over the weekend, I spoke to Health Service managers in Edinburgh and to the Association of School Meals Organisers at its annual conference on Saturday. I went through the community charge proposals in some detail with both bodies because I knew that they were interested in them. The hon. Member for Cathcart will be surprised to hear that in the main they were responsive to the Government's position and attitude. Indeed, they were constructively helpful and responsive. The gentleman who replied to my speech and thanked me at the conference of the Association of School Meals Organisers said that he was one of the converts. I found that interesting.

The hon. Member for Cathcart has said that his constituents are saying that they will never again vote for the Conservative party. I did not expect to be received favourably at the association's conference. Indeed, I expected to have to defend the Government's policy on these matters, including the amendments that we are discussing. I was pleasantly surprised when there was a warm response and a positive reaction to what I had to say in going into detail on the community charge. It is the misinformation about the Bill that is causing the public to be concerned. When one deals with facts, one should present them as they are.

This morning, I received a letter from some individuals who said that they had never voted Conservative, but, having had the opportunity to hear me speak and to study in detail the booklet that the Government sent out, they now believe that the Conservative party is the only party bringing forward sensible proposals in respect of local

government finance. That is why the amendments, particularly those in respect of registration and other matters that require tightening up, are before the House.

Of course, there were problems with deceased individuals being notified. Whoever the dependants may be, they have other sensitive matters to deal with. As everyone knows, a bereaved person has many difficult and sensitive matters to deal with. In most instances bereaved people are assisted by relatives and others. It normally falls to someone else to carry out such activities. That will become the norm in respect of many things that must be done. We all know that, at some time or other, our parents will be deceased, and we must deal with the matters that must be dealt with. It is nonsense to suggest that, somehow, there is something different about this matter.

I welcome the amendments. They will help to tidy the Bill and will make it easier for people such as myself, who have been out positively canvassing the benefits, also to explain what will happen.

6.30 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I, too, regret that we are faced with all these amendments and, once again, are not allowed sufficient time properly to debate them. Some amendments, such as No. 95A, refer to obtaining information. As we know, preparation for the poll tax has been under way in Scotland for some time. Forms are dropping through people's doors throughout the country. I should have thought that the alarm and, indeed, the chaos that seem to be threatening would be a warning to England and Wales.

What I could most usefully do is to read a letter that I recently received. It is one of many such letters to registration offices from various people in my constituency. One gentleman states:

"Firstly I have never signed to promise money without knowing the figure involved. I appreciate that you cannot know the exact figure but an estimate to the nearest £20 would suffice."

That gentleman strongly objects to putting his signature to a bit of paper, promising money when he does not know how much will be involved. He went on:

"Secondly, although I may be a responsible person under the terms of the the Act, one can only be responsible for oneself. I cannot be responsible for any information regarding names and dates of birth of any additional occupants of the above address."

An awful lot of people are objecting on such grounds. That gentleman objects also on the ground of fairness. As hon. Members will probably realise, that constituent lives on an island. He does not see why he should pay the same as a resident in a town,

"when I have neither street lighting nor a footpath in front of my house, have no access to recreation and leisure facilities and suffer the obvious penalties of living on an island."

[Interruption.] He was not forced to live on that island —he was born and brought up there. His parents before him and his grandparents before them lived there. I shall never accept the argument that, if one does not want to take on the penalties of living on an island, one should get out or not go there in the first place.

It was interesting to see the registration form that was delivered to my house at the weekend. At the top, it states:

"A responsible person can be required to provide information, but being a responsible person does not make that person liable to pay a community charge on behalf of any other person."

That is misleading. Often, those who are designated as responsible are husbands or wives. Most often, it is the husband, because, in the past, they have been the ratepayers. The form does not make it clear that a husband could be responsible for his wife's poll tax if she is not an earner. Registration officers must examine and solve that problem.

Going back to amendment No. 95A relating to obtaining information, an article on the fairness of the poll tax in this week's editon of *The Observer* was particularly instructive. It stated that, when canvassers tried to obtain information from council estates, they were sent packing. In fact, the only welcoming ports of call for poll tax canvassers were those that had BMWs in their drives or, perhaps, had double-glazed windows.

I hope that the Minister will examine, albeit briefly, amendment No. 81, which refers to visiting forces. It is causing some concern, particularly to my council in Argyll and Bute. I hope that he will be able to tell us what the consequences will be for visiting forces and their wives. Clause 128 refers to people who have relevant associations with members of visiting forces. Who are such persons? Does it mean that the wives of men in visiting forces are not to pay the poll tax? If so, all the girls in Dunoon may rush off to marry United States naval chaps.

Mr. Home Robertson: Surely they have better taste.

Mrs. Michie: Many of them have married United States naval men.

What will happen if a United States naval officer is posted back to the United States and his wife and children must stay in Dunoon? Will they continue not to pay the poll tax? I am not clear about the consequences, and I shall be glad if the Minister will say a word on the matter.

Unfortunately, nothing in the amendments does anything to ease the additional burden that has been heaped on church and crofting communities. Because of the inequity of the poll tax, the Government have lost the argument. That inequity will never be forgotten—certainly in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome the amendments, just as the House should welcome them. They refine and improve the legislation. Anything that does that to any measure going through the House of Commons should be welcomed in the interests of the people in this country. I advise the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) that the explanatory notes on the form that I received clearly show what the figure will be —£210. I am surprised that her local authority has not given her constituent the same valuable information. Some Opposition Members have been shouting about £300 and £400 in my part of the world. That shows just how they have gone out of their way to mislead the population about the community charge. As has been said, it is most unfair and unreasonable of Members of Parliament, and candidates in the election, to cause alarm and despondency by quoting figures which are way out of proportion to what they will be in a year's time.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Name one example.

Sir Hector Monro: I have just given the hon. Lady the average figure in Dumfries and Galloway, as quoted by the regional council and the local government information leaflet published last week. That was £210 for Dumfries

[Sir Hector Monro]

and Galloway and for the districts therein. That is as accurate as can be ascertained at present. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Lady laughs about that, she had better stick to her own district and not interfere with other people's.

I believe that the wishful thinking of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), that this important Bill might be in jeopardy at Third Reading, is totally without any foundation. He will discover that shortly. If that is so, then the legislation will proceed in any event in Scotland. I am glad that the regional authorities are making such important steps towards collecting the information as required by the Act, and proceeding with all pace to carry out the procedure satisfactorily. I wonder what the policies of the various parties opposite—including the Scottish National party, the Labour party and every Tom, Dick and Harry—are to the implementation of the community charge. Some hon. Members say, "Take illegal action"; others say, "Take legal action."

The general public is thoroughly muddled by the deliberate attempt by Opposition Members to make life as difficult as possible for the people of Scotland, when they should be assisting them to introduce a scheme that is much fairer to all the people in Scotland. They certainly believe that in Scotland.

It is fascinating that, when I have been knocking on doors, in which I suspect I have been more effective than the hon. Member for Cathcart, I have found a very different response. Hon. Members opposite also fail to explain during their tours of their constituencies the very effective rebate system which is so important to the community charge. Once people understand that rebates operate on a sliding scale, going up to 80 per cent., and perhaps beyond for those on very low incomes, they will begin to realise that the rebate system is a valuable and important one

Mr. Maxton: Second to the anger that people are expressing about the poll tax is the large number of people who are bitter, bitter, bitter about losing their housing benefit and social security payments as a result of this Government's legislation.

Sir Hector Monro: They also say how delighted they are that the Government have increased nurses' salaries so substantially. If the hon. Member for Cathcart wishes to move away from the Bill, he can have that answer.

The amendmends tabled by the Government are certainly advantageous. It is right that the Minister should take the opportunity to put them in this Bill, so that they can be included in the work going ahead on the community charge in Scotland. I have every intention of supporting the Government tonight.

Mr. Salmond: I hope that the four English Conservative Back Benchers who have stayed to listen to this debate, and who, perhaps, are "beginning to understand" the full implications of this legislation, will find the Scottish debate instructive.

We have reached a fine pitch in the poll tax debate as it applies to Scotland—a fine pitch of argument and also a fine pitch of absurdity, which is reflected in some of the amendments that the Government are proposing.

Amendment No. 92, for example, substitutes "registered person" for the phrase

"person whose name is entered in the register".

In amendment No. 97, "registered person" is defined as someone

"who is registered in the register".

That was an amendment crying out to be tabled!

The Minister has already given us an insight into the only two certainties of life, which are death and taxes. Amendment No. 95 contains what must be the Government's major and generous concession in the Scottish legislation. The Minister releases dead people from the responsibility of telling the registration officer that they have died. That responsibility is placed on the executors. If the Minister is concerned about the feelings of the relatives of the deceased, will he say how many deceased people have received, as responsible people, a registration form, because of the use of the electoral roll? If the Minister is so concerned with the feelings of relatives, perhaps he will try to estimate how many such forms have been distributed and what the Government propose to do about it.

6.45 pm

There are a number of other serious matters in these amendments. Amendment No. 95A, for example, extends the list of people to whom the registration officer can elicit information to anyone

"whom he reasonably believes is, has been or is about to be resident in the registration area."

How can a registration officer know who is "about to be" registered in his area? The only source of information is other registration officers in Scotland, who have supplied him with the names of people who are leaving their registration areas. We have to square that with the question on page 10 of this multi-coloured brochure "You and the Community Charge" from the "Ministry of Truth":

"Will it be a national register?"

The answer was

"No."

There will not be a national register for the poll tax only—in the same way as there was not a national police force during the miners' strike. There will certainly be shared information and the exchange of information between registration officers. That is clearly implied within the amendments.

In amendment No. 96, we see another breach of civil liberties in the legislation. That extends the list of people who can seek information from the register:

"any such other person as may be prescribed shall be entitled to inspect the register to such extent and for such purposes as may be prescribed".

In other words, an extension of those who are allowed to inspect the full poll tax register.

The original legislation detailed that the assessor and the electoral registration officer would have that entitlement. This amendment is a major extension of those who are going to be allowed to look at the full register. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked the Minister why date of birth information was required in the Scottish legislation. We have the answer in this amendment. It is that, within a fairly short period, the poll tax number, including the date of birth information, will be the "passport", without which a member of the public will not receive, or be able to receive, access to any entitlement of right of any state service. The lie to the Government's position on the matter is given in that amendment, with the extension of those who can look at the full poll tax register.

We are debating the Scottish amendments at the fag end of the English legislation. As several hon. Members have said, it will mean that many important amendments receive no discussion at all this evening. I doubt very seriously whether the 38 officers and gentlemen who revolted last Monday night are going to revolt on these Scottish amendments. Of those 38 hon. Members, no fewer than 30 voted for the Scottish poll tax in the last Parliament. Indeed, two other hon. Members were not in the Parliament. These amendments will not be decided by Scottish Members, 63 of whom are now opposed to the poll tax. These amendments will be decided by the English Members who are not even present in this Chamber to hear the arguments. The revolt of the officers and gentlemen makes it clear that English Members of Parliament vote blind on Scottish legislation. We are seeing yet another example of that this evening.

The anger in Scotland, I should tell the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), is expressed not just in terms of opposition to the poll tax but takes in no less than 71 per cent. of the supporters of the Labour party who wish to go further. According to an opinion poll last month, 71 per cent. wanted a campaign of non-payment, in line with 78 per cent. of the supporters of my party, a majority of the supporters of the Democrats and even 20 per cent. of the supporters of the Conservative party. They all wanted a campaign of non-payment.

Mr. Bill Walker: If the Scottish National party is so keen on a campaign of non-payment, why is Angus district council assuming a policy that payment and registration should be carried out? Will the hon. Gentleman also say why it is necessary for Scottish National party activists to send letters to the local papers in my constituency asking questions that were never asked of me at public meetings and giving answers that I have not given? The answer is that they have to rely on distortions about the facts, on misinformation and downright lies. That is how desperate they are.

Mr. Salmond: Many things are said about the hon. Gentleman. My view is that most are understatements rather than overstatements. The position of the Scottish National party is that a mass campaign of non-payment is necessary and justified given the circumstances in which the Scottish legislation was passed.

Mr. Maxton: I am slightly surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not congratulated the Government on the changes that they have introduced to allow direct access to DHSS payments by the courts and finance officers. That was requested of the Government by Grampian regional council, of which the SNP is part of the ruling group which voted for the proposal.

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Gentleman was following closely—he should have been, as he attended some Committee meetings at which I explained at some length the SNP proposal for the mass campaign of non-payment—he will know that it is precisely those who are in a position to pay, those who can pay but who will not pay, whom we are trying to recruit for a mass campaign of non-payment. They will stand shoulder to shoulder with many people in Scotland who cannot and will not pay. That is the point behind the mass campaign of non-payment.

In conclusion, when English Conservative Members do not even attend Scottish debates, vote blind on Scottish legislation and ram issues such as the poll tax down the throats of the Scottish people against the wishes of the vast majority of Scottish Members, it is little wonder that there is the level of resentment and anger in Scotland that will sustain a mass campaign of non-payment. There can be no more eloquent testimony to the need for a Scottish parliament than the circumstances and the decision of this evening's vote.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) might reflect that many of the Labour Members who served on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill were from Scotland. We commented on that at the time. Indeed, we welcomed the interest that they were taking in what is predominantly an English Bill, which affects Scotland only peripherally. It is a little disappointing that only one of the Scottish Labour Members who served on the Standing Committee is participating in this debate. Perhaps that reflects the interest of Scottish Labour Members in the legislation.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) chastised me when I intervened to say that I am ignorant of Scottish affairs. I assumed that valuations in Scotland were carried out by the Inland Revenue, whereas, as he correctly pointed out, they are carried out by the local government valuers. However, the principle of what I was saying—that valuation practice does not require legislation—is absolutely correct. The hon. Gentleman would do well to reflect that properties that are valued according to the contractors' test, such as extractive industries and large-scale petrochemical industries—many of which are important to Scottish industry—operate at a disadvantage compared with their competitors in England, which have a decapitalisation rate that is a good deal more favourable.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that he thinks that that is an anomaly which should be corrected and that he is considering how best it should be corrected. He has suggested that we might have an automatic mechanism for adjusting the decapitalisation rate which might require an amendment. I would have thought that that should be welcomed by Opposition Members. It is something of which the hon. Member for Cathcart would have been aware if he had taken the trouble to read the *Hansard* of the Committee proceedings.

Mrs. Fyfe: The reason why my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is absent is simple. He is serving on a Committee. I do not know the reason for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), but, knowing his strong commitment to getting a lot done in this place, I can only assume that it is a good reason. It was unreasonable of the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) to assume that there is an inadequate reason for their absence.

I shall raise two points briefly, as other hon. Members wish to speak. We heard earlier from the Minister that people in Scotland are required to give their date of birth to the poll tax canvasser because the Government received representations on that in Scotland. When pressed on that point, we were told that the local government body that called for that was the Rating and Valuation Association. The people of Scotland will be amazed to learn that, in

[Mrs. Fyfe]

spite of their strength of feeling and their vehement opposition to the measure requiring their birth date, they are getting it because of the wishes of a body of which the vast majority have probably never heard. I should add that the Rating and Valuation Association has conducted itself in a most responsible fashion by explaining clearly to people all along what the legislation is about and why it should not be brought into force. It is incredible—it will certainly be noticed with anger in Scotland—that that is the best reason that the Government can produce for enforcing the date of birth requirement on the Scottish population.

The main reason why I wish to speak is that only this weekend I discovered that in my constituency a poll tax canvasser had knocked on the door of a mentally handicapped person on Friday night. That man has lived all his life until recently in institutions and has managed to live alone and independently only recently, in a small flat in my constituency. He can do so only with the support of local social workers who give him advice on his budget. He lives in a block of flats in which other people are similarly placed. Many cannot read or write with any fluency, yet the poll tax canvasser went round on Friday night, handed over the poll tax form and said that she would be back on Monday. When the man, who was alert enough to have been taking in information from the television, said that he knew that he had 21 days in which to return the form, he got the reply that he had better return the poll tax form on Monday or he would be liable to be fined.

I should add that that man is able to work at a relatively undemanding job, with low pay of about £67 per week. He is on housing benefit, which is about to be cut heavily. At the moment it is uncertain what housing benefit he will end up with. However, it seems pretty certain that he will be liable to pay the full poll tax, considering that last week we learned that a single man with a take-home pay as low as £53 per week would be liable to pay the poll tax.

Since this sort of thing is happening in Strathclyde, we must assume that it could be happening elsewhere in Scotland right now and that there are dangers of its happening throughout England and Wales when registration begins there. As the Secretary of State has evidently not yet taken any steps to ensure that poll tax canvassing is carried out with some sensitivity, is it not reasonable to say that before people go around knocking on doors, they should at least find out in advance where people such as I have described are living, so that they can be approached far more sensitively than has been described? What training does the Minister propose shall be given to poll tax canvassers? What information will he ensure that they are given? People are being misinformed about their rights in the most aggressive manner. It is important that the Minister takes up this issue without any further delay.

7 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), I support the amendments.

It is important to deal with the allegation made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) that the Government have changed their position. He did not produce any exact quotations of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to back up that allegation. As I understand it, the Government's position has been clear and unchanged throughout. It has been that, obviously, there might need to be detailed changes in this Bill to apply to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 because of changes that have been agreed to the legislation south of the border, but that that would not change the timetable. The Government have always made it clear that detailed changes such as the amendments entail might have to be introduced without changing the timetable.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) once again used the opportunity to tell the House about the SNP's great campaign of non-payment.

Mr. Bill Walker: Did my hon. Friend notice, as I did, that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) ducked completely the question whether Angus district council, which is run by the SNP now but will not be after 5 May, would co-operate with Tayside region in the registration process?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Not only did the hon. Gentleman duck that, but he ducked the question from the hon. Member for Cathcart about Grampion region, and whether he and his few hon. Friends would be the first over the barricades.

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Gentleman is looking for an answer to whether I shall pay my poll tax, it is that I shall not pay it.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's confirmation that SNP Members of this Parliament will under no circumstances pay the community charge, so they will subject themselves to the inevitable penalties of the law. We shall see in due course. In the past, that question has been ducked by SNP leaders.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) raised an important point which my hon. Friend the Minister may wish to comment on if he is successful in catching your eye at the end of the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have found a continuing confusion about the difference between the responsibility for filling in the form and the responsibility for paying the community charge. All hon. Members know what the position is, because we have been following the legislation, but it is important that people know what their joint and several liability is in relation to their spouse, and that their liability does not extend to other members of the household. A man came to my surgery, critical of the community charge, but when I explained that he did not have to pay for all his teenage children over 18, he was immediately transformed into a supporter. He left with the words, "That will get them out of the house a bit quicker."

The hon. Lady also said that people did not know what their community charge would be. Obviously, it is not known what the precise community charge will be, but I would have thought that we do know what it will be within £20, as she asked. The figure for Eastwood on the latest calculations is £264.

A disinformation campaign is continuing in significant parts of Scotland, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not underestimate it. People who are not necessarily heavily involved and do not necessarily have

sources of advice easily available are particularly vulnerable to the disinformation which is being supported implicitly and explicitly by some hon. Members.

Mr. Foulkes: I never thought that I would find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), but he is absolutely right: there is a disinformation campaign, but it is coming from new St. Andrew's House. What is more, it is being carried out at the expense of taxpayers, and the Comptroller and Auditor General might do well to look into that.

I have not spoken in many of these debates——

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Why not?

Mr. Foulkes: I have been happy to sit and listen to my hon. Friends make powerful and persuasive arguments against all aspects of the Bill. But I am glad to have an opportunity to speak now, because last Thursday I was speaking at a public meeting in Cumnock town hall, where every seat was taken. It was a packed meeting, the like of which I have not seen since the miners' strike. Almost unanimously, those present wanted us to oppose and obstruct the process of registration by every legal means. They objected strongly to, and rejected SNP suggestions of, non-payment. In particular, one person remembered being pushed into a rent strike by SNP personnel and that the people who had been pushing had paid their rents, leaving the rest high and dry.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman has had his say. At the meeting, the people wondered whether, if they followed the advice of the nationalists, they would again be left high and dry, or whether the SNP would bail them out in their hour of need.

Mr. Salmond: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why the System Three poll showed that 71 per cent. of Labour voters wanted such a campaign? The real division on this issue is not between the Labour party and the SNP, but between the Labour leadership and Labour supporters.

Mr. Foulkes: It is about time that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues started attacking the real enemy, the Tories, instead of spending hour upon hour attacking the Labour party. I was saying that the SNP was leading people down a path when it knows that it cannot support those whom it encourages down that path.

The other point that became clear at the meeting was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). In several areas registration officers are intimidating, threatening and harassing all sorts of people to return the forms within three days, and it is implied that if they do not a £50 penalty will come into force.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency I have just discovered that those who are dishing out poll tax forms are not only eagerly and zealously collecting them—it is 10p to hand one out and 40p to bring back a completed form—but are insisting that elderly people should fill in the forms, and even filling in the forms and signing them on those people's behalf? That must be illegal and I am certainly having that investigated in Kilmarnock.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend from the Ayrshire mafia. My hon. Friend rightly describes the unfortunate activities of those who are becoming known as bounty hunters in certain parts of Scotland.

The Minister should be careful and he should have a wee word with Mr. John Brewis about what it is like to be the ex-hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. Protest meetings are not only taking place in places such as Cumnock town hall. Let us consider what *The Galloway Gazette* said on Saturday 23 April. The headline ran:

"Larger hall needed as 200 turn out to Poll Tax 'Stop It' campaign meeting".

That meeting took place in the Minister's constituency. Mr. Dangerfield, a Stranraer solicitor, chaired the meeting —he does not sound like a Labour supporter to me—and he is reported as saying:

"the way Tory voters who will benefit from the Community Charge had still opposed the legislation 'makes me proud to be Scottish'".

He quoted from the Tory Reform Group—I think that the Secretary of State used to be a member of that; Michael Ancram was. Mr. Dangerfield quoted from the Tory Reform Group pamphlet that said:

"Poll tax is fair only in the sense that the Black Death was fair—it is indiscriminate."

We did not say that, the Tories did. Mr. Dangerfield quoted those words in Stranraer—part of the Minister's constituency—at the packed meeting. *The Galloway Gazette* also reported that:

"Rev. Thomson said that his worry about the Poll Tax was both as a parish minister and as an individual . . . Mr. Thomson said that people had to find 'any ways we can to help at a local level, to try to bring home to the Government our concern'."

Mr. Maxton: The Minister will not meet such people.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is right; the Minister is not prepared to meet such people and listen to their concerns. The Minister need only read the leader in *The Galloway Gazette* to realise that, in Galloway, the writing is on the wall for him as it was for Michael Ancram, Anna McCurley——

Mr. Galbraith: Michael Hirst.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful for that timely prompt from my hon. Friend. The writing was on the wall for all those people who served on the Scottish poll tax Bill Committee and the same will be true of the Minister.

The leader in *The Galloway Gazette* says:

"Democratic accountability, the Tories argue, demands the Poll Tax, but there are many waverers now in the party who will be urging caution and now is surely the time to think again."

If *The Galloway Gazette* is now calling for time to think again it must be time for the Minister to shake in his shoes.

At the meeting held in Cumnock town hall the feeling that came through loud and clear was that we must obstruct and oppose registration by every legal means. That is what the "Stop It" campaign has said, that is what the Labour party says and I believe that is what the Scottish Social and Liberal Democrats—what a mouthful —are saying. The Churches and trade unions in Scotland are also saying the same thing.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman has, quite properly, harangued the SNP. He should consult his hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) who put some direct questions to Gordon Wilson during a programme in which he and I participated. Gordon

[Mr. Bill Walker]

Wilson ducked those questions and, equally, gave no suggestion that he would be prepared to give legal advice to all those whom he is advising to break the law. Is that not typical of the SNP?

Mr. Foulkes: I find myself agreeing with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and, since that is a dangerous position to be in, I shall return to the theme of my speech.

Over the weekend I got my poll tax registration form and I have already amassed a whole series of questions to put to the registration officer before I can even contemplate filling it out. Who is the responsible person in my household? *[Interruption.]* Apart from the person to whom it is addressed—myself—my wife and indeed my mother are also in the household. I have already told the Minister that that lady strongly objects to that part of the registration form where she must put her date of birth—there is no conceivable reason for that. As Members of Parliament we have a legitimate question—given that we also have to live down here—regarding which is our main residence. That is not clear on the form. I have a young son of 17 who is currently in the middle of examinations. How do I know whether or where he will be a student during the course of the next financial year? I cannot answer that question, but that is just the beginning regarding the questions that need to be answered.

7.15 pm

Many of the officers who have been asked to administer the registration say that it is becoming an administrative and bureaucratic nightmare. The Secretary of State for the Environment has already said that the poll tax will cost twice as much as the rates to administer—other estimates say that it will cost three times as much. The way things are going I believe that it will cost more than three times as much to raise exactly the same amount of money. Surely that is crazy.

Mr. Home Robertson: How is my hon. Friend advising his constituents to reply to the question on the form that says:

"If no-one is solely or mainly resident in the premises, please write 'no-one.'"?

Mr. Foulkes: Earlier on we needed clairvoyance to predict debts, now we need spirits to complete the form. My hon. Friend, in his usual eloquent and humorous way, has illustrated one of the many, manifest ridiculous aspects of the poll tax form.

The message that comes across loud and clear is that we must obstruct the poll tax. We are organising the obstruction campaign because we are convinced that sensible members of the House of Lords—we have already heard from Lord St. John of Fawsley—will throw out the legislation. We in Scotland must delay the implementation of the poll tax until it is defeated, if not in this Chamber, in the other place. We shall then hold the Secretary of State for Scotland to his promise, that if the legislation does not go through for England it will be scrapped for Scotland. In answer to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), that is what the Secretary of State said and that is on record.

The poll tax is unfair and unworkable. In Scotland we shall do everything we can to obstruct it. We shall do everything we can to obstruct it for England in the House of Commons. We shall do everything we can to make sure that it never sees the light of day.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have sat through almost all of the five days of consideration of the English Bill. It is curious that here, in the Scottish debate, it is as though the seasons are rather more advanced than they are south of the border. The English have got as far as the early spring; we are approaching high summer because we know more about the proposals.

The tragedy of all this is that the House of Commons is not being allowed to do its proper job because we are under the guillotine. If we were not under the guillotine the Bill would have what Enoch Powell, on another memorable occasion, called "the smell of death" about it. It would have been half way to destruction because of the kind of ribaldry to which it has been subjected by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). My hon. Friend has, quite properly, made a joke of many things, but they are serious points. They are creepy crawly things that are coming out from under the stones.

The trouble is that it was very difficult to interest the Scots in the first place. It was even more difficult to interest the English. During the last election campaign—I hope that I am forgiven one personal reminiscence—I was in the Hyndburn constituency visiting proud Accrington. I was rebuked by the Labour candidate for spending 10 minutes of my speech on the poll tax. We have come some way since then.

As is my wont during English debates, I wish to ask some questions. The first was also asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). What has been said to those people who will receive 40p for each completed form? There is far more than anecdotal evidence that some of them are behaving roughly, and notices going up saying "Judas" are very unpleasant. We must ask whether it is worth the candle. Under what instructions and guidelines are they operating and what have they been told by the Government? Some of us believe that they may be exceeding what they have been told to do.

Secondly, in the debate late last Wednesday on joint liability, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill and other colleagues participated, we heard that even in England, which is a year behind us, people are deciding not to ask their grandmothers, their great aunts and others to live in the family home but are deciding that they should go elsewhere. All of us will have heard personal cases from our constituents. I do not wish to exaggerate the position because I do not believe that there has been much chucking-out of people, but in some cases the decision has been made not to take them in.

What have the Government done about that? I want the Minister to tell us whether the Scottish Office is monitoring the position. There is no evidence that it is taking into account matters such as the variation in need.

If the Bill goes ahead, many worthwhile people of all parties, not least the Conservative party, who would have gone into local government will have second thoughts. It may not be worth the candle to become a councillor. It is an honourable profession now, but in the future it may be rather different, and our country will be the poorer.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), as ever solicitous of my welfare, urged me to speak to the former Member of Parliament for Galloway, Mr. John Brewis, to find out what it was like to be defeated. Of course, he was never defeated as the Conservative Member for Galloway. He retired after a long and distinguished career. If I had to find a defeated Member, I would have to go to the Scottish National party and talk to Mr. George Thompson, who was defeated in 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Foulkes: As I recall, I asked the Minister to find out what it was like to be the former Member for Galloway.

Mr. Lang: Whether the hon. Gentleman said that or whether he used the word "defeated", his purpose was clear from his reference to my former colleague in the House.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said that he had wanted to debate several other amendments. I should have been happy to debate them, and we have managed to debate some of the points in those other amendments. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) referred to the use of postcards by Strathclyde community charge registration officer. The hon. Lady mentioned the alleged intimidation of a mentally handicapped person in her constituency. She will appreciate that I cannot comment on the case without knowing all the details, but I can say that intimidation has no part in the procedure.

The procedures adopted by the Strathclyde community charge registration officer were examined carefully in a recent court case brought by the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams). He was turned down on all four counts, and the sheriff found that the procedures being used were "convenient, sensible and practical". The postcard in question makes it clear that if there is a difficulty with the form, the canvasser will help in its completion.

The hon. Member for Cathcart and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) asked about the penalty on executors who fail to notify a death. The civil penalties in the 1987 Act do not apply to this provision. There is no provision for a penalty in the case of non-notification by the executors. The sanction on them is that until the deceased is deleted from the register, he and his estate will continue to be liable to pay the personal community charge. Therefore, it will be part of the executor's duties to the deceased's estate to ensure that notice is given to the community charge registration officer. When the officer is notified by the executor, he can amend the register retrospectively to the date of death. Any excess community charge that may have been paid will be repayable.

Moving from death to birth, the hon. Member for Cathcart asked me whether the date of birth would be kept private. I assure him that the date of birth will not be part of the section of the register that is available for public inspection. For the internal purposes of a local authority, the system may generate reference numbers from the date of birth for each individual, but they will not be numbers which a person is required to memorise or quote when he moves from one authority to another. Nor, as has been suggested in some quarters, will identity cards be issued.

During the passage of the Scottish Act, strong representations were made by local authority practitioners, including the Rating and Valuation Association, that an identifier was necessary to distinguish between people of the same name living at a single address or to allow the checking of the identifying numbers of individuals who move from one registration area to another. The need for that was subsequently underlined by Cipfa Services Limited in its report on the operational aspects of the community charge system.

The hon. Members for Cathcart and for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) asked about exemptions for visiting forces. The spouses of members of visiting forces who are citizens of the United Kingdom are not exempt. The exemption for members of visiting forces is an exemption from the personal community charge. If a member of such a force buys a second home in the United Kingdom, he may be liable for the standard community charge. I appreciate that that is important in the hon. Lady's constituency, since such a person is currently liable for rates.

Local authorities will not lose out financially, nor will their community charge payers, because of the community charge exemption for visiting forces. The rateable value of property occupied by visiting forces is determined by the Rating of Government Property Department in consultation with the local assessor. The department pays the rates for the property direct to the local authority and recovers a proportion, known as the beneficial proportion, from the visiting force. The beneficial proportion reflects the extent to which rates are payable for property services rather than personal services and is paid by the visiting forces by international agreement. The proportion is negotiated with the Governments concerned. The Government will be considering with those other Governments what similar arrangements may apply under the community charge system. Those arrangements will be designed to ensure that authorities need not bear an unreasonable burden as a result of the exemption for members of visiting forces who live in their areas.

The hon. Member for Cathcart asked me about the uniform business rate. We have always made it clear that legislation is likely to be needed to complete the harmonisation process. Legislation to introduce a uniform business rate will be needed after the harmonisation processes are complete, and it is premature to consider that now. In the meantime, we have made arrangements to freeze and index-link poundages.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said that amendment No. 96, which relates to inspection of the register, would mean that community charge registration would become a requirement for obtaining local authority services. That is the worst sort of scaremongering. The terms on which inspection of the register will be allowed have been made clear. They are limited to purposes connected with the administration of the community charge. The hon. Gentleman asked how a community charge registration officer would know that someone was about to be resident. An example would be when a house is sold and the seller's lawyer informs the registration officer of the name of the buyer well before he moves in.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) asked me to confirm that responsibility for completing the form and for paying the charge were not

[Mr. Lang]

one and the same. I am happy to do so. Indeed, the registration form mentions that point in three different places.

The community charge in Scotland is now the law of the land and anyone who advocates disrupting the procedures, as we have heard from Opposition Members, must bear in mind the penalties that can be imposed upon those who fail to provide information or who provide false information when they are properly required to do so by registration officers. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was absolutely right to refer to the shocking distortions and misrepresentations among the Opposition parties. By their antics in opposing the community charge they have shown their carelessness not only with the truth but with the rule of law. When I accused them in a recent debate of flirting with lawlessness, I think I was being too kind; now, day after day, week after week, in this House and outside it, Opposition Members demonstrate their contempt for parliamentary democracy, and in doing so they reveal that they are unfit for Government.

I urge hon. Members to approve the amendment as one more step towards the smooth and efficient implementation—despite the worst endeavours of the Opposition parties—of a new system of paying for local government that will abolish the discredited and unfair domestic rates system and put in its place a better, fairer system.

It being half-past Seven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Orders [22 February and 13 April] and the Resolution [18 April], to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 329, Noes 230.

Division No. 274] **[7.30 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin

Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

Question accordingly agreed to.

It being after half-past Seven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question on amendments moved by a member of the Government up to the end of clause 144 and new clause 14.*

Amendment made: No. 79, in page 70, leave out line 19.

No. 80, in page 70, leave out lines 22 to 24.

Clause 128

EXEMPTION FROM PERSONAL CHARGE

Amendment made: No. 81, in page 70, line 28, leave out from '1987' to the end of line 33 and insert

', section 8 (liability for personal community charge) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (8) at the end there shall be added the following paragraphs—

"(e) persons who have a relevant association with a visiting force;

(f) persons who are members of a headquarters and dependants of such persons."

(3) After subsection (9) there shall be added the following subsections—

"(10) For the purpose of paragraph (e) of subsection (8) above—

(a) a visiting force, in relation to any particular time in a financial year, is anybody, contingent or detachment of the forces of a country to which any provision in Part I of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 applies at that time; and

(b) a person has, at any particular time in a financial year, a relevant association with a visiting force if he has at that time such an association within the meaning of that Part.

(11) For the purposes of paragraph (f) of subsection (8) above—

(a) a headquarters, in relation to any particular time in a financial year, is a headquarters or organisation designated at that time by an Order in Council under section 1 of the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations Act 1964;

(b) a person is, at any particular time in a financial year, a member of a headquarters if he is at that time such a member within the meaning of the Schedule to that Act; and

(c) a person is, at any particular time in a financial year, a dependant of such a member if he is at that time such a dependant within the meaning of that Schedule."'.*[Mr. Lang.]*

Clause 129

COMMUNITY CHARGES: CROSS-BORDER INFORMATION

Amendment made: No. 75, in page 71, line 31, leave out subsection (6).—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Clause 134

SEPARATE ADMINISTRATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Amendment made: No. 108, in page 73, line 9, leave out 'pools shall be established and maintained' and insert 'accounts shall be kept'.

Clause 136

ORDERS AND REGULATIONS

Amendment made: No. 177, in page 73, line 33, leave out '(6)' and insert '(7)'.

No. 74, in page 73, line 38, after first 'above' insert 'or section *[Commencement: Scotland]* below'.

No. 178, in page 73, line 45, at end insert—

'(7) The power to make an order under paragraph 5 of Schedule 6 below shall be exercisable as there mentioned.' —*[Mr. Lang].*

Clause 137

INTERPRETATION: AUTHORITIES

Amendment made: No. 32, in page 74, leave out line 13. —*[Mr. Lang.]*

Clause 141

FINANCE

Amendment made: No. 109, in page 75, line 26, at end insert—

'(2)' Any sums received by the Secretary of State in consequence of this Act shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund.'.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Clause 143

EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 121, in page 75, line 32, after 'Sections', insert *'(Social security).'*.

No. 82, in page 75, line 30, leave out 'paragraphs 1 and 8' and insert 'section *[Commencement: Scotland]* above, Part II'.

No. 76, in page 75, line 32, after '131', insert '136, 137(1), 138, 139(5) and (6), 140'

No. 77, in page 75, line 34, leave out 'and section 129(6) above'—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Schedule 12

TRIBUNALS

Amendments made: No. 35, in page 110, line 38, at end insert—

'(2) The regulations may include such provision as he sees fit in relation to membership, staff, accommodation, equipment, procedure and other matters relating to the tribunals.'.

No. 36, in page 110, line 46, leave out 'General Rate Act 1967' and insert '1967 Act or any other Act'.

No. 37, in page 111, line 4, leave out from beginning to end of line 18 and insert—

'Membership

4.—(1) Regulations under paragraph 1 above may include provision—

(a) that the number of members of a tribunal is to be such as is determined by the Secretary of State;

(b) for the appointment by a prescribed person or persons of the members of each tribunal;

(c) that one of the members is to be president of the tribunal;

(d) that the president is to be appointed by the members by a prescribed method, and that if one is not so appointed within a prescribed period the president is to be appointed by the Secretary of State after consulting such prescribed persons as he sees fit;

(e) for the appointment by the president of a tribunal of some of its members (who may include the president) to the position of chairman;

(f) that persons are to be disqualified from becoming or continuing to be members in prescribed circumstances;

(g) that members are to be disqualified from acting in cases falling within prescribed descriptions;

(h) that prescribed factors are not to disqualify persons from becoming or continuing to be members;

(i) that prescribed factors are not to disqualify members from acting;

(j) as to the duration (subject to disqualification, termination or resignation) of any appointment as president or member or chairman;

(k) allowing the Secretary of State to terminate an appointment as president;

(l) requiring the person or persons who appointed a member to terminate the appointment if the Secretary of State so directs after consulting the person or persons who made the appointment;

(m) allowing a president to terminate a person's appointment as chairman, and requiring a president to do so if the Secretary of State directs him to do so;

(n) allowing a person appointed as president or member or chairman to resign if such notice as may be prescribed is given;

(o) that a person who ceases to be president or member or chairman is to be eligible for re-appointment in prescribed circumstances;

(p) that a member is to be entitled to such travelling, subsistence and other allowances as may be prescribed.

(2) The regulations may include provision for the administration of members' allowances to be the responsibility of the clerk of the tribunal.

Staff

5.—(1) Regulations under paragraph 1 above may include provision—

(a) that a tribunal shall appoint a clerk of the tribunal and may appoint other employees;

(b) that a tribunal shall pay to its employees such remuneration and allowances as the tribunal determines;

(c) that (subject to disqualification) employees shall be appointed on such other terms and conditions as the tribunal may determine;

(d) that an appointment shall be invalid unless made with the approval of the Secretary of State;

(e) that a determination as to remuneration or allowances shall be valid unless made with the approval of the Secretary of State given with the Treasury's consent;

(f) that persons are to be disqualified from becoming or continuing to be employees in prescribed circumstances;

(g) that employees are to be disqualified from acting in cases falling within prescribed descriptions;

(h) that prescribed factors are not to disqualify persons from becoming or continuing to be employees;

(i) that prescribed factors are not to disqualify employees from acting.

(2) The regulations may include provision—

(a) that any function of making an appointment, or determing remuneration or allowances or other terms or conditions, may be performed on behalf of a tribunal by two or more of its members;

(b) that one of those members must be the president.

(3) The regulations may include provision for the administration of employees' remuneration and allowances to be the responsibility of the clerk of the tribunal.

(4) The regulations may include provision that where a person ceases to be employed by a local valuation panel and immediately becomes employed by a valuation and community charge tribunal, for the purposes of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 his period of employment by the panel shall count as a period of employment by the tribunal and the change of employment shall not break the continuity of the period of employment.

(5) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (4) above a local valuation panel is a local valuation panel constituted under a scheme under section 88 of the 1967 Act.

(6) Employment with a valuation and community charge tribunal shall be included among the kinds of employment to which a scheme under section 1 of the Superannuation Act 1972 can apply, and accordingly in Schedule 1 to that Act (in which those kinds of employment are listed) "a valuation and community charge tribunal" shall be inserted after "Police Complaints Authority".

Accommodation and equipment

5A.—(1) Regulations under paragraph 1 above may include provision requiring a tribunal to—

(a) maintain a permanent office, and

(b) make arrangements to secure that the tribunal has such other accommodation, and such secretarial and other equipment, as is sufficient for the performance of its functions.

(2) The regulations may include provision that any function as to accommodation or equipment may be performed on behalf of a tribunal by its clerk.

Procedure

5B.—(1) Regulations under paragraph 1 above may include—

(a) provision for determining which tribunal is to deal with an appeal;

(b) provision that prescribed functions of a tribunal relating to an appeal may be discharged on its behalf by its clerk or other prescribed employee;

(c) provision that prescribed functions of a tribunal relating to an appeal may be discharged on its behalf by one of its members;

(d) provision that prescribed functions of a tribunal relating to an appeal may be discharged on its behalf by some of its members;

(e) provision as to the selection of a member who is to discharge functions relating to an appeal on behalf of a tribunal (which may include provision that he must be the president or a chairman);

(f) provision as to the number and selection of members who are to discharge functions relating to an appeal on behalf of a tribunal (which may include provision that one of them must be the president or a chairman).

(2) The regulations may include provision—

(a) prescribing the procedure to be followed for initiating an appeal, and authorising or requiring it to be dismissed if it is not initiated within a prescribed time;

(b) authorising an appeal to be disposed of on the basis of written representations in prescribed circumstances;

(c) prescribing the procedure to be followed before the hearing of an appeal;

(d) authorising an appeal to be withdrawn before the hearing in prescribed circumstances.

(3) The regulations may include provision prescribing the procedure to be followed at the hearing of an appeal, and such provision may include provision—

(a) requiring the hearing to take place in public except in prescribed circumstances;

(b) as to the persons entitled to appear and to be heard on behalf of parties to the appeal;

(c) authorising the hearing to proceed in the absence of a party or parties to the appeal in prescribed circumstances;

(d) requiring persons to attend to give evidence and produce documents;

(e) as to evidence generally (whether written evidence or oral evidence given under oath or affirmation) and, in particular, as to the use as evidence of information supplied under Schedule 8 or 11 above or under regulations under Schedule 2 above or under section 82 of the 1967 Act;

(f) as to the adjournment of the hearing.

(4) The regulations may include provision—

(a) that where two or more members of a tribunal are acting the decision of the majority is to prevail or, if the votes are equal, the appeal is to be reheard;

(b) requiring reasons for a decision to be given;

(c) authorising a decision to be given orally or in writing;

(d) authorising a decision to be reserved;

(e) authorising or requiring an order to be made in consequence of a decision;

(f) that an order may require a register or list to be altered (prospectively or retrospectively), or an estimate to be altered, or a designation of an individual as a responsible individual to be revoked, or a penalty to be quashed or reduced, or a designation under section 5 above to be revoked;

(g) that an order may require any ancillary matter to be attended to;

(h) authorising or requiring a tribunal to review or set aside a decision, or to vary or revoke an order, of the tribunal in prescribed circumstances.

(5) The regulations may include provision—

(a) requiring decisions and orders to be recorded;

(b) as to the proof of decisions and orders;

(c) authorising the correction of clerical errors in records of decisions and orders;

(d) requiring decisions, orders and corrections to be communicated to the parties to appeals.

(6) The regulations may include provision that, subject to any other provision of the regulations, a tribunal may regulate its own procedure.

(7) The regulations may include provision that a person who without reasonable excuse fails to comply with any requirement imposed by the regulations under sub-paragraph (3)(d) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 1 on the standard scale.

Orders

5C.—(1) This paragraph applies where a tribunal orders—

(a) the community charges registration officer for a charging authority to alter the authority's community charges register,

(b) the valuation officer for a charging authority to alter a local non-domestic rating list of the authority,

(c) the central valuation officer to alter a central non-domestic rating list,

(d) a charging authority to alter the valuation list maintained by the authority under section 59 above, or

(e) a charging authority to alter its residual rating list.

(2) If the order is recorded in accordance with any provision included in regulations under paragraph 1 above, the officer or authority ordered shall—

(a) alter the register or list concerned accordingly, and

(b) attend to any ancillary matter provided for in the order (such as the repayment of an amount, or the allowance of an amount by way of deduction against a sum due).

5D.—(1) This paragraph applies where a tribunal orders—

(a) a charging authority to alter an estimate, made for the purposes of regulations under Schedule 2 above, of the amount a person is liable to pay in respect of a community charge of the authority,

(b) the community charges registration officer for a charging authority to revoke a designation of an individual as a responsible individual under regulations under Schedule 2 above,

(c) a charging authority to quash or reduce a penalty imposed by it under Schedule 3 above,

(d) the community charges registration officer for a charging authority to quash or reduce a penalty imposed by him under Schedule 3 above, or

(e) the community charges registration officer for a charging authority to revoke a designation under section 5 above.

(2) If the order is recorded in accordance with any provision included in regulations under paragraph 1 above, the authority or officer ordered shall—

(a) alter the estimate, revoke the designation or quash or reduce the penalty accordingly, and

(b) attend to any ancillary matter provided for in the order (such as the repayment of an amount, or the allowance of an amount by way of deduction against a sum due).

Inspection of records

5E.—(1) This paragraph applies to records which relate to decisions and orders of a tribunal and which are required to be made under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 1 above.

(2) The regulations may include provision that a person may, at a reasonable time stated by or on behalf of the tribunal concerned and without making payment, inspect records to which this paragraph applies at the tribunal's permanent office.

(3) The regulations may include provision that if without reasonable excuse a person having custody of records to which this paragraph applies intentionally obstructs a person in exercising a right under any provision included under sub-paragraph (2) above, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 1 on the standard scale.

Finance

5F. The Secretary of State shall make such payments as are necessary to meet any expenditure incurred in or in connection with the performance by tribunals of their functions (whether as regards remuneration, allowances, accommodation, equipment or otherwise).'

No. 39, in page 111, line 27, leave out from 'amending' to end of line 28 and insert

', repealing or revoking any provision of or made under the 1967 Act or any other Act;

(c) provision as to orders, which may include provision requiring the carrying out of an order made by a valuation and community charge tribunal in exercising jurisdiction conferred by the religious.

Interpretation

7. In this Schedule "the 1967 Act" means the General Rate Act 1967.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Schedule 13

Amendments

Amendments made: No. 82A, in page 111, line 31, leave out from beginning to end of line 45 and insert—

'Part I

England and Wales'

No. 38, in page 112, line 22, at end insert—

'Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971 (c. 62)

4A. In Part I of Schedule 1 to the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971 (tribunals under direct supervision of Council on Tribunals) the following shall be inserted after paragraph 12—

"Local taxation

12A. Valuation and community charge tribunals established by regulations under Schedule 12 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988.".'.

No. 123, in page 113, line 2, at end insert—

'Social Security Act 1986 (c.50)

7A.—(1) The Social Security Act 1986 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 20 (income-related benefits) in subsection (11) after the definition of married couple there shall be inserted—

""residual rate" shall be construed in accordance with Part IV of the 1988 Act;".

(3) In section 28 (arrangements for housing benefit)—

(a) in subsections (1)(a) and (3)(a) for "rating" (in each place where the word occurs) there shall be substituted "charging";

(b) in subsections (1) and (2) for "rates" (in each place where the word occurs) there shall be substituted "a residual rate".

(4) In section 30 (housing benefit finance) in subsection (1)(a) for "rating" there shall be substituted "charging".

(5) In section 56 (legal proceedings) in subsection (4)(a) for "rating" there shall be substituted "charging".

(6) This paragraph shall have effect as regards housing benefit which is, or falls to be, provided in respect of a financial year beginning in or after 1990, and as regards subsidy in respect of such benefit.'

Amendments made: No. 83, in page 113, line 2, at end insert—

'PART II

SCOTLAND

Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 (c. 60.)

7A. In section 6 of the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 (ascertainment of certain values of lands and heritages) after subsection (8) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(8A) The Secretary of State may by regulations made under this subsection prescribe the principles to be applied in arriving at the net annual value of lands and heritages under subsection (8) above.

(8B) Regulations made under subsection (8A) above—

(a) may be made so as to apply differently to different areas or in relation to different cases or classes of case;

(b) may include such supplementary, incidental, consequential or transitional provisions as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient; and

(c) shall be made statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".'.

No. 84, in page 113, line 2, at end insert—

'Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (c.65)

7B. After section 110 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 there shall be inserted the following new section —

Estimate of amount due for non-domestic district rate.

110A.—(1) In relation to each financial year a regional council shall estimate the amount due to the council of each district which falls within their region in respect of the non-domestic district rate for that year as that amount falls to be ascertained in pursuance of regulations made under section 110 of this Act.

(2) For the purposes of making the estimate mentioned in subsection (1) above, it shall be assumed that in respect of the financial year concerned both the regional council and the district council determine the maximum non-domestic rate prescribed in relation to each of them in respect of that financial year under section 3(2) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987.

(3) The regional council shall, before such date may be prescribed in relation to each financial year, notify the council of each district in their region of the estimate made under subsection (1) above in relation to that district for that financial year.".'

No. 85, in page 113, line 3 at end insert—

'7D.—(1) Section 2 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 (exclusion of domestic subjects from valuation roll) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Where, after 1st April 1989 by virtue of regulations made under subsection (4) below, any lands and heritages or any parts of lands and heritages—

(a) cease to be domestic subjects, they shall be entered in the valuation roll;

(b) becomes domestic subjects, any entry in the valuation roll in respect of such lands and heritages shall be deleted,

with effect from such date as may be prescribed by such regulations."

(3) For subsection (4) of that section there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(4) The Secretary of State may vary the definition of domestic subjects in subsection (3) above by including or excluding such lands and heritages or parts thereof or class or classes of lands and heritages or parts thereof as may be prescribed.".'

No. 255, in page 113, line 3, at end insert—

'7A.—(1) Section 3 of that Act (non-domestic rates) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (b) of subsection (4) after the word "earlier" there shall be inserted the words "or such lesser figure as may be specified in (or calculated in a manner specified in) an order made by the Treasury in respect of the financial year in respect of which the calculation is to be made".

(3) After subsection (10) there is be added the following subsection—

"(11) An order made under paragraph (b) of subsection (4) above shall be made by statutory instrument; but such an order amending or revoking another) shall not be effective unless it is approved by resolution of the Commons House of Parliament before—

(a) regulations have been made under subsection (2) above prescribing a maximum non-domestic rate in relation to any local authority in respect of that financial year; and

(b) the first order made by the Secretary of State, in respect of that year, under paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 4 to this Act has been approved by a resolution of that House.".'.

No. 86, in page 113, line 3, at end insert—

'7E.—(1) Section 5 of that Act (statutory and other references to rateable values etc.) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3) for the words "Where in any enactment" there shall be substituted the words "subject to subsection (3A) below, where in any enactment (including an enactment contained in a subordinate instrument)".

(3) After the said subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(3A) Where in any enactment (including an enactment contained in a subordinate instrument or an enactment which falls to be construed in accordance with subsection (3) above) there is a reference to a rate or rateable value or to any other factor connected with rating, the Secretary of State may make regulations providing that the reference shall instead be of some factor other than the one connected with rating.

(3B) Regulations may provide as mentioned in subsection (3A) above—

(a) as regards such enactment, or enactments of such description, as may be prescribed;

(b) in such way as the Secretary of State thinks fit (whether by amending enactments or otherwise).".'

No. 87, in page 113, line 3, at end insert—

'7F—(1) Section 8 of that Act (liability for personal community charge) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1) for the words "aged 18 or over who is solely or mainly resident in the area of a local authority in any financial year shall be liable to pay" there shall be substituted the words "who is, at any time in a financial year—

(a) aged 18 or over;

(b) solely or mainly resident in the area of a local authority; and

(c) not exempt from liability under subsection (8) below or by virtue of section 30(2) of this Act,

shall be liable to pay, in respect of that time,".

(3) For subsections (2) and (3) of that section there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1) above, a person's liability to pay the personal community charge in respect of any time in a financial year shall subsist until the date on which the deletion of the entry in the register in respect of such liability takes effect.

(3) Where a person is liable to pay the personal community charge in respect only of part of a financial year, the amount which he is liable to pay shall be calculated by apportionment on a daily basis.".'

No. 88, in page 113, line 3, at end insert—

'7G.—(1) Section 10 of that Act (liability for and calculation of standard community charge) shall be amended as follows.

(2) For subsection (8) there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(8) Subject to subsections (8B) and (9) below, the standard community charge shall not be payable in respect of relevant premises in respect of whichever is the shorter of—

(a) the period for which the premises are unoccupied and unfurnished;

(b) a period of three months or such longer period as the levying authority may determine;

and the levying authority may determine that different periods shall have effect for different premises or different classes of premises.

(8A) For the purposes of subsection (8) above 'relevant premises' are premises to which this section applies, being premises—

(a) which are unoccupied and unfurnished; and

(b) as regards which notice is given to the levying authority by a person liable to pay the standard community charge in respect of the premises that they are unoccupied and unfurnished.

(8B) Subsection (8) above shall have effect in respect of any relevant premises only once during any period (whether it fall in one or more than one financial year) in respect of which the standard community charge is, or would but for that subsection be, payable in respect of the premises.

(8C) Before making a determination under paragraph (b) of subsection (8) above a levying authority which is a regional council shall consult the district council for the district in which the premises are situated.".

(3) In subsection (9) of that section for the words "that subsection" there shall be substituted the words "subsection (8A) above".

(4) After the said subsection (9) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(9A) Where a person is liable to pay the standard community charge in respect only of part of a financial year, the amount which he is liable to pay shall be calculated by apportionment on a daily basis."

(5) In paragraph (b) of subsection (10) after the word "charge" there shall be inserted the words "which would, if the premises were for the whole of that financial year premises to which this section applies and were not, at any time in that year, relevant premises for the purposes of subsection (8) above, be".'.

No. 89, in page 113, line 4, leave out paragraph 8 and insert the following paragraph.

'8.—(1) Section 11 of that Act (liability for and calculation of collective community charge) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (7)—

(a) after the words "shall be" there shall be inserted the words "the amount which is"; and

No. 90, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'9. After section 11 of that Act there shall be inserted the following new section—

"*Estimate of amount produced in districts*

11A.—(1) In relation to each financial year a regional council shall estimate the amount produced by each of the district community charges for that year in each district in their region as that amount falls to be ascertained in pursuance of regulations made under paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to this Act.

(2) For the purposes of making the estimate mentioned in subsection (1) above, it shall be assumed that in respect of the financial year concerned both the regional council and the district council determine—

(a) a personal community charge of £1, or such other amount as may be prescribed; and

(b) a standard community charge multiplier of 2, or such other number as may be prescribed.

(3) The regional council shall, before such date as may be prescribed in relation to each financial year, notify the council of each district in their region of the estimate made under subsection (1) above in relation to that district for that financial year.

(4) In this section "district community charges" has the same meaning as in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 to this Act.".'.

(b) such requirements as to—

(i) publication of the effect of this subsection and subsection (4) above; and

(ii) the right of a registered person to have an entry relating to him omitted from the extract, as the Secretary of State thinks fit; and

(c) that the regional or islands council shall make the extract available

(i) for inspection by members of the public to such extent and at such times and places; and

(ii) for sale to such extent, in such form, on such terms and conditions and at such places, as may be prescribed.".'.

No. 91, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'10.—(1) Section 13 of that Act (Community Charges Register) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1) for paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) there shall be substituted the following paragraphs—

"(a) the name of every person liable to pay any of the community charges in the registration area;

(b) in the case of a person liable to pay the personal community charge, the address of his sole or main residence;

(c) in the case of a person liable to pay the standard or collective community charge, his address and the address of the premises in the registration area in respect of which that charge is payable;

(cc) in the case of premises in respect of which the collective community charge is payable, the collective community charge multiplier determined for the time being in respect of those premises;".

(3) In paragraph (e) of that subsection for the word "these" there shall be substituted the word "the".'

No. 92, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'11. In section 14(2) of that Act (notice of registration) for the words "person whose name is entered in the register" there shall be substituted the words "registered person".'.

No. 93, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'12.—(1) Section 15 of that Act (amendment of community charges register) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (5)—

(a) for the words "any amendment to the register which might affect that person, but" there shall be substituted the words "or amending any entry in the register which might affect that person, but, except in the case of an amendment such as is mentioned in subsection (6) below,";

(b) for paragraphs (a) and (b) there shall be substituted the following paragraphs—

"(a) copy of the entry or (as the case may be) the entry as amended; or

(b) where the amendment consists of the deletion of an entry, notification of such deletion";

(c) for paragraph (i) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"(i) the effect of the entry or (as the case may be) of the amendment to the entry in the register;".

(3) After subsection (5) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(6) Where an amendment requires to be made to an entry in the register in consequence of the death of a registered person, the registration officer shall send to the executors of the deceased notice of the fact that he has, with effect from the date of the deceased's death, deleted the entry in the register relating to the deceased.

(7) Except where the context otherwise requires, any reference in this Act to the amendment of the register or of any entry in the register shall include a reference to the deletion of such an entry.".'.

No. 94, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'13.—(1) Section 16 of that Act (registration appeals) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1) for the words "A person who is registered in the register as being liable to pay any of the community charges" there shall be substituted the words "A registered person".

(3) In paragraph (a) of that subsection for the words "in respect of his liability to pay any of the community charges" there shall be substituted the words "in relation to him".

(4) In paragraph (b) of that subsection for the word "any" where it first occurs there shall be substituted the word "the".'.

No. 95, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'14. In section 18 of that Act (obtaining of information from individuals) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Where a registered person dies his executors shall notify the registration officer of the date of the person's death—

(a) in the case of executors nominate, not later than one month after that date;

(b) in the case of executors dative, not later than one month after the date of their appointment."

No. 95A, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'15. After the said section 18 there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Obtaining of information generally*

18A. (1) The registration officer may require any person whom he reasonably believes is, has been or is about to be resident in the registration area to supply to him such information—

(a) as the registration officer may reasonably require for the purposes of the exercise of his functions under this Act; and

(b) as is in the possession or control of such person.

(2) A person required to supply any information in pursuance of subsection (1) above shall supply the information within such period, not being less than 21 days, as the registration officer may require.

(3) Subsections (10) to (12) of section 17 of this Act shall have effect for the purposes of this section as they have for the purposes of that section; and for the purposes of this section any reference in those subsections—

(a) to a responsible person shall be construed as a reference to a person required to supply information under subsection (1) above;

(b) to the prescribed period shall be construed as a reference to the period mentioned in subsection (2) above; and

(c) to a requirement under subsection (5) shall be construed as a reference to a requirement under subsection (1) above.".'

No. 96, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'16.—(1) Section 20 of that Act (inspection of register) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (a) of subsection (2) for sub-paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) there shall be substituted the following paragraphs—

"(i) the addresses of premises in the registration area;

(ii) the name of any person appearing in an entry relating to such premises (but not so as to enable him to ascertain whether that person resides at the address of such premises); and

(iii) the collective community charge multiplier determined for the time being in relation to any premises (other than premises of such class or classes as may be prescribed) in respect of which a collective community charge is payable."

(3) After paragraph (c) of that subsection there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(d) any such other person as may be prescribed shall be entitled to inspect the register to such extent and for such purposes as may be prescribed."

(4) After subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(3A) Without prejudice to subsection (3) above, the register shall be available for inspection to the extent permitted by subsections (1) and (2) above in such circumstances, subject to such restrictions and in such other places in the registration area as may be prescribed.

(3B) In relation to as much of the register as is kept otherwise than in documentary form, a right of inspection conferred by this section is a right to inspect the information in the register in legible form."

(5) for subsections (4) and (5) there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(4) The Secretary of State may, by regulations, require the registration officer to make such extracts of the register, disclosing the information specified in sub-paragraphs (i) to (iii) of subsection (2)(a) above, as may be prescribed.

(5) Regulations made under subsection (4) above may prescribe—

(a) such date or dates in each financial year on which an extract is to be made;

No. 97, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'17. In section 26(1) of that Act (interpretation) after the definition of "register" there shall be inserted the following—

"'registered person' means a person who is registered in the register as being liable to pay any of the community charges, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly; ".'.

No. 98, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'18.—(1) Schedule 2 to that Act (Levy, collection, payment and recovery of community charges) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 2(1) (demand notices) at the beginning there shall be inserted—

"Subject to paragraph 2A below,".

(3) After paragraph 2 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"2A. Where a person's liability to pay a community charge arises only by virtue of section 8(7) of this Act (joint and several liability)—

(a) the levying authority shall not issue a demand notice before the date prescribed under paragraph 2(1) above; but

(b) they shall issue such a notice at such time as it appears to them that they will be unable to recover payment of the community charge from any other person who is liable to pay the charge.".

(4) In paragraph 3 (appeals against demand notices) in sub-paragraph (a) after the word "against" there shall be inserted the words—

"(i) where the liability to pay the community charge is stated to be by virtue of section 8(7) of this Act (joint and several liability), such liability, and

(ii) in every case,".

(5) In paragraph 4 (payment of community charges)—

(a) in sub-paragraph (3) at the beginning there shall be inserted the words "Subject to sub-paragraph (8) below"; and

(b) in sub-paragraph (8) at the end there shall be added the words "or on such other day in that month as the levying authority may determine".

(6) In paragraph 5 (arrangements with housing bodies) at the end there shall be added the following sub-paragraph—

"(7) No document issued by a housing body in pursuance of an arrangement made under this paragraph to a person liable to pay a community charge or any instalment thereof shall contain or refer to arrangements for any payment other than the payment of such community charge or instalment."

(7) In paragraph 6 (accounting or district community charges)—

(a) for sub-paragraph (3) there shall be substituted the following sub-paragraph—

"(3) The Secretary of State may prescribe what deductions are to be made in estimating and ascertaining the amount produced by each of the regional and district community charges levied by a regional council."; and

(b) in sub-paragraph (6) of the words "'district community charges' has" there shall be substituted the words "'regional community charges' and 'district community charges' have".'.

No. 233, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'19. In the said Schedule 2 in paragraph 4(7) for the words "rebate under or by virtue of section 24 of this Act from that amount or instalment" there shall be substituted the words "reduction in that amount or instalment in consequence of any community charge benefit under Part II of the Social Security Act 1986".'.

No. 236, in page 113, line 7, at end insert—

'.In the said Schedule 2, in paragraph 5 (arrangements with housing bodies) at the end of sub-paragraph (1) there shall be added the words "or of any of the authority's responsibilities as regards community charge benefit in pursuance of Part II of the Social Security Act 1986.'—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Schedule 14

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 99, in page 115, line 18, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 2, in subsection (3), paragraph (b); and in subsection (5) the words "or part of a class" and the words "(3)(b) or".'.

No. 100, in page 115, line 26, column 3, at end insert——

In section 11(11), in paragraph (c) the words "under this Act".
In section 20, in subsection (3) the words "and at such other places as may be prescribed" and the words from "and in relation" to the end.
In Schedule 2, paragraph 4(2).'.

No. 234, in page 115, line 26, column 3, at end insert——

'Section 24.'—*[Mr. Lang.]*

New Clause 14

COMMENCEMENT: SCOTLAND

'.The provisions of this Act which extend only to Scotland shall come into force on such day as the Secretary of State may by order appoint; and different days may be so appointed for different provisions or for different purposes.'—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would not gladly miss any opportunity to dance another little jig on the deck of the Government's coffin ship, otherwise known as the poll tax Bill. I was very surprised to learn on returning to the Chamber that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) had cast aspersions on me by saying that I was not present in the Chamber during the debate. The only reason that I was not in the Chamber is that I was attending——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): That is not a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. It is for the Chair to determine points of order. That is not a point of order. Attendance in the Chamber has nothing whatever to do with the Chair.

Mr. Wilson: Further to my point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to ask the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West to withdraw his remarks?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not in order. As I have said, the attendance of hon. Members in the Chamber or anywhere else in this place has nothing whatever to do with the Chair.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I find myself in the same position as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame. North (Mr. Wilson) in that I would like to be able to correct gratuitous remarks that were made in ignorance.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already made it clear that this matter has nothing whatever to do with the Chair.

Mr. Butterfill: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it a genuine point of order?

Mr. Butterfill: It is that, further to the points of order that have been made, may I tell the House that I did not identify either of the hon. Gentlemen who have made the points of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That has cleared the matter up nicely. I thank the hon. Gentleman very much.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) clearly said that he regretted the absence during the debate of the other Scottish Members who served on the Standing Committee. Those Members were my hon. Friends the Members for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Tomorrow's *Hansard* will let us all know exactly what was said.

New Clause 10

ACQUISITION OF INTERESTS LESS THAN FREEHOLD

'After section 79 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Acquisition of leasehold etc. treated as acquisition of freehold*

79A.—(1) In any case where—

(a) an interest in or right over land is acquired on or after 10th March 1988, and

(b) the interest or right confers a right to possession or occupation of the land, and

(c) the interest or right is neither the fee simple absolute in possession nor an interest or right not exceeding one year in duration, and

(d) the acquisition is neither by gift nor by deed with no consideration other than the presumed consideration imported by the deed,

then, for the purposes of this Part of this Act, the authority making the acquisition shall be treated as having acquired, for a consideration which is not in money alone, the fee simple absolute in possession in that land, subject only to the interests and rights referred to in subsection (2) below.

(2) The interests and rights referred to in subsection (1) above are those (if any) to which the interest or right which is actually acquired is subject at the time of the acquisition, excluding any which arise by virtue of a mortgage or charge to secure the payment of money.

(3) In subsection (1)(b) above—

(a) 'possession' has the same meaning as in the Law of Property Act 1925, that is to say, it includes receipt of rents and profits or the right to receive the same, if any; and

(b) 'occupation' means occupation without possession but, subject to that, includes future occupation.

(4) Subsection (12) of section 80 below applies for the purposes of this section but where, by virtue of that subsection, an authority is taken to acquire an interest exceeding one year in duration, that interest shall not be regarded for the purposes of subsection (1)(c) above as the fee simple absolute in possession.".'—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.45 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government new clause 11—*Prescribed expenditure*—Government new clause 12—*Share and loan capital and guarantee payments*—and Government amendment No. 42.

Mr. Ridley: These new clauses and the consequential amendment in the title of the Bill were foreshadowed in the statement that I made on 9 March. Together with the regulations, they deal with two major defects that have become apparent in the existing legislation and regulations dealing with capital controls. The regulations, which are down for debate later, give effect to the statement about the leasing changes, lease and leaseback. They are temporary, in that they will hold the position until there have been consultations and further consideration. Amending regulations will be provided and these are merely a stopgap to hold the position until we have had time to consult.

First, some councils were raising money by lease and leaseback deals in order to avoid the consequences of not having balanced their revenue budgets. The law does not permit local authorities to borrow to cover revenue deficits, nor does it permit them to pledge their assets as security. It was clearly necessary to prevent them from achieving the same result and avoiding these restrictions by lease and leaseback.

Secondly, both leasing and barter were being used by more and more councils to undertake capital expenditure over and above that provided for in the Government's public expenditure plans. The measures do not prevent barter or leasing from being used, but bring such transactions within the spending limits laid down.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Would the Secretary of State like to tell the House how he makes these new capital expenditure controls consistent with the encouragement given by the Secretary of State for Wales to health authorities in Wales? He said that when they contemplate building new hospitals they should organise it in such a way that the private sector builds the hospitals and leases them back to the health authorities in Wales. That is encouraging public authorities to do sale and leaseback deals with the private sector and contradicts what the Secretary of State is saying.

Mr. Ridley: All I am saying is that that has to be done within the system of capital controls and not as an addition to it. That does not mean to say that it cannot still be done, which is the point that I was making.

In broad terms, the new clauses deal with three matters. First, they bring barter fully within the capital control system. Part barter transactions have always been subject to control, so this hardly represents a major change of policy. Secondly, they amend the statutory rules that determine how much prescribed expenditure is scored when assets are acquired by leasing. Thirdly, they bring within capital controls the acquisition of share or loan capital in the making of payments under the guarantees of borrowing.

The new regulations provide that acquisition of a lease of property will be outside capital expenditure controls only if it is for less than three years, if it is not renewable for a longer period, if it is not an extension of a previous lease or if it is not part of a larger transaction. That is a fair precis of the overall effect of these clauses.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I have listened with care to what the Secretary of State said, and I heard him say that barter deals will be included in the regulations if they are entire barter deals as opposed to part barter deals. Why has such concern been expressed by the Association of District Councils which, as the Secretary of State will know, said in response to his announcement on 9 March that the new clauses will put many carefully negotiated good schemes in jeopardy?

Mr. Ridley: The reason is that district councils are doing a lot of barter deals. I have something to say later which may be of comfort to the hon. Gentleman.

I shall not go into the detail of the new clauses as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), will provide any information that hon. Members ask for at the end of the debate, but I should like to enlarge on the reasons for the measures. All Governments control local authority capital expenditure, which is part of public expenditure. That is not a proposition that any political party seriously opposes. I think that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) agreed with that proposition.

A short definition of public expenditure is that it involves things that are paid for now or later out of taxation. I emphasise the words "or later". Like individuals, the Government have some scope for deferring, or advancing, the actual payments, whether by borrowing, by credit or by hire purchase, but the commitments once entered into have to be paid for eventually. It is the normal accounting convention, and has been ever since public expenditure planning was introduced in its modern form, that expenditure should be recorded when assets are acquired or when work is done and not when the payments are actually made.

That is the basic philosophy of the local authority capital control system. When capital assets move in and out of the ownership or control of the local authority sector, the full value of those assets should be counted as public expenditure. Equally, when improvements are carried out to assets already within that sector, the full cost should be counted. The amount that is counted represents the call that is being made on the nation's resources. It does not and should not depend on the precise arrangements made to finance the expenditure.

Similarly, when assets move out of the local authority sector, a capital receipt is recorded. Again, the amount of the receipt does not necessarily reflect the financial terms of the disposal. It measures the worth of the assets that have been released.

The purpose of the capital control system is to secure that public expenditure and local authority capital assets, less capital receipts from the disposal of such assets, match the public expenditure provisions that have been made. We do not intend to stop barter deals, merely to bring them within the capital control system. They have been used to avoid it; why else would authorities go to the trouble of keeping the transaction off their books?

Barter involves transfers of assets into and out of the public sector. It cannot be right that such transfers should

[Mr. Ridley]

take place outside the system under which the acquisition of assets by local authorities is controlled. Barter often does not offer good value for money. In some cases, it involves a middleman, who takes a cut. It usually involves selling to a single bidder who might not want it for himself. That is no way for a local authority to realise the best price of its assets on behalf of its ratepayers, because it cannot test the market.

Any scheme which takes place off the books is not necessarily the highest priority, nor subject to the same financial scrutiny that would apply if it was competing against other schemes within the capital control system. It may be claimed that barter schemes do not affect public expenditure, but I do not believe that. There is an opportunity cost involved. If a local authority sold a piece of surplus land for cash, public expenditure, and often public debt, would be reduced. If it swaps the land for a swimming pool, the opportunity for that reduction would be lost.

Barter was taking place on such a scale that it had to be brought under the capital control system. Since 9 March, we have been able to find out much more accurately what was happening.Two things have emerged. First, many schemes of both types are in the pipeline where commitment has been made or expenditure incurred. Secondly, the prescribed proportion rules bite harshly on some barter schemes such as land swaps and property rationalisation.

Therefore, I have two important and major relaxations to announce to the House this evening. The first concerns schemes that are in the pipeline. In my statement on 9 March, I said:

"I and my right hon. Friends will consider issuing additional capital allocations where we are satisfied that the agreements were not entered into for the purpose of evading capital expenditure or borrowing controls."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 327.]

I propose to use two criteria in interpreting what one might call cases in the pipeline. The first involves the extent to which expenditure has already been incurred or other commitments entered into, whether by the local authority or by any other party. For example, sites might have been acquired, design work might have been undertaken or tenants might have been rehoused, or perhaps there is evidence of some other commitment.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ridley: In a moment.

The second criterion is the extent to which the scheme is designed neither to increase the stock of assets over which the local authority has effective control, nor to raise money on the security of the authority's assets. If local authorities consider that schemes which were in the pipeline on 9 March meet both those criteria, they should apply to my Department for extra capital allocations.

Mr. Heffer: Has the Minister considered which local authorities fall into one category and which fall into the other? Does it mean that by chance Conservative councils are in one category—that which he will treat sympathetically—and that Labour councils are in the other category?

Mr. Ridley: I have looked at that, and it does not mean what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Will my right hon. Friend say something about the case of a small and careful local authority—the North Devon district council? The sheer scale of expenditure on harbour improvements at Ilfracombe, the building of marinas and the dredging of the docks will be far outside the capital ability of such a council. The only way that such a development can be achieved is to go to a developer—in fact, it is seeking ideas from more than one company. They involve barter between council land and developer money. If the council goes outside the normal capital expenditure controls and, although our authority is allowed to spend only some £250,000 annually, on this one occasion only it seeks to spend £2 million, and barter is essential for the finance, will this form of harbour and commercial improvement be ruled out?

Mr. Ridley: I have no knowledge of the scheme that my hon. Friend has described. If he will send me details of it, we shall certainly consider it.

I was coming to the second major relaxation which possibly could be of help in that case. Obviously, I cannot make a decision without having seen the details. It applies only to barter deals.

The representations which I have received since my statement on 9 March have also persuaded me that the existing legislation and regulations are a particular constraint on what I might call "in and out" transactions. By these I mean schemes where a particular asset is acquired so that another asset, or possibly the same asset, can be disposed of and where the disposal can happen only if the acquisition happens first. The inhibiting effect of the capital control system on property rationalisations was commented on by the Audit Commission in its report on local authority property which drew attention to the massive scope for local authorities to make better use of their property holdings.

We already have a limited back-to-back scheme under which additional allocations can be given to facilitate the acquisition of assets and their subsequent sale, as might happen when a council uses its land assembly powers to facilitate a private sector development. I propose to replace that scheme by an "in-and-out" scheme. Additional allocations will be available for three classes of transaction: first, the exchange of land for land; secondly, the replacement of existing assets held by the local authority by assets to be used for broadly similar purposes; and, thirdly, schemes in which the main intention is to facilitate investment by the private sector in assets which, when the scheme is completed, will be owned, operated and controlled by the private sector.

Mr. Dalyell: We have had difficulties with the legal advice that the Secretary of State has received from the lawyers who advise the Department of the Environment. Is it not rather difficult in law to establish—the Secretary of State seems to depend on this—motive and intention? One can deduce things from circumstantial evidence, but in law it is difficult to prove these things.

8 pm

Mr. Ridley: No, because the full nature of any agreement will be submitted and it is the ultimate objective of that agreement which we shall consider. The hon.

Gentleman might prefer me to withdraw these concessions, but I do not think that I will do so, because I believe that they will be helpful.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I thank the Secretary of State for his courtesy in giving way. It is not easy, hearing about such concessions in a debate like this, to understand specifically what the Secretary of State intends. He will be aware that two major projects in Carrick district council, within my area, have been affected, and the council has made representations to him. Would it be possible to make some effort about the problems of Carrick district council, and for somebody from the Department to meet an all-party delegation, as has been requested, to try to sort through these problems? Secondly, can he comment on the circumstances that arise in one case, where a major asset is in urgent need of renewal or replacement and the council is considering disposing of another asset to pay for that? That would be completely impossible within capital restraints, but the asset will otherwise waste away. Will that come within the terms of the Secretary of State's concessions?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot interpret these conditions in relation to any particular scheme, whether in theory or in detail, at the Dispatch Box tonight. That is not something for the hon. Gentleman to worry about. We shall consider any scheme that his council puts forward and see any delegation that he wishes to bring. There is now to be a period of consultation with the local authorities on these proposals, and when that is concluded the Government will bring forward new regulations which will be the opportunity to comment on the final plan.

One of the difficulties with this matter has been that, until my statement on 9 March, I did not know what was going on or how much of it was outside the law. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Of course, because local authorities took good care not to tell me because they knew perfectly well it was outside the capital controls regime. Now that we know what is going on, we can make a more sensible analysis of how to deal with it.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, I will give way, but this is the last occasion, because I do not want to take too much time.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. I am not surprised that he made a statement without knowing the full implications of the situation. Equally, he is now asking us to understand some fairly complicated proposals without being 100 per cent. certain of what is involved. I only hope that he is more certain than he was on 9 March. The London borough of Newham is involved in a number of leaseback and barter deals, all of which are aimed at doing something about the growing homelessness problem in the area. In general terms, would such schemes be acceptable, as we are trying to address a serious problem?

Mr. Ridley: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, a large amount of business was being transacted under both these heads, but it was carefully concealed from my Department because——

Mr. Rooker: How did the right hon. Gentleman know?

Mr. Ridley: We found out enough to be able to make the statement on 9 March. Now we know the full picture, we can consider it much more carefully, and I have already said that we will.

On the second point, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) must study the particular schemes in relation to what I have said. I know that he cannot assimilate this and entirely understand it just like that and without some advice. However, there is an opportunity for consultation and representations before we come forward with the final regulations, which will be designed only after the matters have had public discussion.

I trust that these two major relaxations will be of considerable comfort to those hon. Members who have been alarmed by particular cases which local authorities have brought to their attention. I think that they will deal with many of those that we have already seen, and they should make for a fairer transition and an easier new regime.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State's important statement is a massive climbdown from his statement of 9 March, which he made, as he has admitted in his curiously disarming way, when he did not know what was going on.

It is a new doctrine of Government that Ministers come to Parliament and announce major changes in capital investment programmes for the length and breadth of the country when, on their own admission, they do not know what they are talking about. That is extraordinary. Tonight, we have seen just how ill-considered and downright wrong that politically motivated statement was. It was motivated not by any common sense, evidence or investigation into the circumstances. It was a political response, partly, I regret to say, engendered by the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and others. The irony of it was that the project that the hon. Member for Acton complained of was, on the admission of the Secretary of State, lawful and in order and it went ahead.

The Secretary of State should have said this in his announcement but I invite him to say it now. He should withdraw the regulations that he is asking the House to approve after 10 o'clock tonight. We knew before his statement, but it is even clearer now, that those regulations are simply a stopgap measure. Why is the Secretary of State so unclear about all this when his own Green Paper, published in 1986, asserted that the Government had had these matters under consideration since 1984? Here we are in 1988 and the Government still do not have a clear idea of what they are seeking to do and why.

The reality is that the Secretary of State has been forced to make this announcement not least because of the massive protest from his own colleagues in local government. When he made his statement on 9 March, he implied that the statement was necessary because of the activities of a handful of mainly Labour-controlled local authorities. We knew that it was not true then, and we certainly have the evidence to demonstrate that it is not true now. That is one of the reasons why the Secretary of State has backed off.

The Secretary of State has manoeuvred oddly throughout this whole business. On 9 March, certain members of the press were provided with a background briefing by officials of the Department of the Environment. That information was never presented to Parliament or published formally. It named certain projects in certain

[Dr. Cunningham]

local authorities. It emerged that much of it was based on anecdotal hearsay evidence, as the Secretary of State was subsequently forced to admit.

When I asked, through my office, for a copy of the information, my private secretary received a letter from the Secretary of State's private secretary dated 10 March, which said:

"I attach a copy of a note which I gather our press officers gave to some members of the Press who asked for examples of the kind of local authority schemes which might be affected by the terms of the Secretary of State's announcement. This was not a note prepared with formal distribution in mind. You will see that it is a list of examples of some of the schemes that the Department has heard about from various sources, primarily MPs, councillors and press reports. It is not in any sense intended as a definitive list of such schemes."

It is outrageous that the Secretary of State should make statements of such importance based on hearsay, gossip and innuendo. That is what the note confesses to. When the Secretary of State——

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, of course I will give way in a moment when I have finished my point. The hon. Gentleman should learn about all the correspondence before he intervenes.

When the Secretary of State was challenged on these points by councillor Jack Layden, the leader of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, he said in his reply dated 29 March:

"The list was a list of examples of large proposed leasing schemes. It was not intended as a full summary of available evidence and neither was it prepared for publication."

However, it was given to the press. It was not prepared for publication, but it was given to the press, not Parliament.

Mr. Butterfill: As the hon. Gentleman might conceivably assent that some local authorities have deliberately tried to conceal what was going on in this area, does he suggest that the Government should employ an army of snoopers, as no doubt he would call them, to root out the details or is it not easier to proceed as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has proceeded, and force a situation in which the details become apparent?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman means when he says that authorities were trying to conceal what was happening. Of course these things would have to be matters for the record for members of the authority. As the hon. Gentleman is talking about concealment——

Mr. Ridley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment.

As the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) is talking about concealment, I want to stress that there is far more concealment in central Government under this Prime Minister than there is in local government under the control of parties of any political persuasion. Local government is far more open than central Government ever has been and it remains so.

Mr. Ridley: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that some of the schemes appear to have been assigned and pushed through without opposition party councillors even being told? If councils will not tell their own councillors, does the hon. Gentleman believe that they will tell me?

Dr. Cunningham: We are quite familiar with these unsubstantiated allegations, unsupported by any definitive statements or evidence. We are aware of the general smear on local government. If the Secretary of State has evidence, why does he not name the authorities involved? He has made a very serious allegation. Which authority is he talking about? Will he name one, two, three or four authorities?

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West and the Secretary of State have referred to concealment. They must think that we have very short memories. Have they forgotten about the leak of correspondence between the Secretary of State for the Environment's office and the Prime Minister's office which occurred a few days ago? There can be no better example of concealment and deception in recent political history than that. Secret memos were sent back and forth aimed at misleading not the Opposition, but Conservative Members of Parliament. If I were a Conservative Member, I would keep pretty damned quiet about concealment at the moment.

The Secretary of State said in his statement:

"I have to inform the House that, once again, a minority of local authorities are employing artificial devices to incur capital expenditure and to undertake borrowing over and above the levels permitted to them under the existing capital control system. Only a minority of authorities are involved".

That certainly was not true then and the right hon. Gentleman knew that. All the evidence on the record now shows that that was not true. It was an attempt to mislead public opinion about those decisions in local government.

I challenged the Secretary of State later on in his statement. I asked:

"Will he confirm, for example, that his proposals will affect large and small local authorities right across the country, under Tory as well as Labour control? Will he confirm that the proposals will affect the capital programmes of many of those authorities, including house-building programmes, redevelopment programmes and capital expenditure on leisure centres?"—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 326-29.]

The Secretary of State sought to imply that all that was not true.

8.15 pm

Mr. Dalyell: May I refer my hon. Friend to column 1170 of the *Official Report* of 22 April 1988 in respect of the leaks between the Department of the Environment and the Prime Minister which are being thoroughly investigated? If they are being thoroughly investigated, could we at some stage be told something about them?

Dr. Cunningham: As ever, my hon. Friend has made an important point. It is perhaps worth asking the Secretary of State whether his ministerial colleagues are being questioned along with the civil servants. As we know from the recent past that a number of these alleged leaks have not been leaks at all, but deliberate acts authorised by no less a person than the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* Of course we know that. Sir Crawley should observe the normal behaviour of a Parliamentary Private Secretary and be seen and not heard.

To reinforce my point about authorities under the control of different political parties, I want to list a few examples almost at random. The Association of District Councils has claimed that 150 of its members had schemes affected by the announcement. Nearly 150 local authority projects worth more than £350 million may be abandoned because of the Government's clampdown on leaseback

and barter deals. Those are overwhelmingly Tory-controlled authorities—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is shaking her head. I will cite one or two examples. The first relates to Spelthorne. Where is the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) now? That authority is Tory controlled. It has a scheme for a town centre redevelopment, involving the disposal of a council-owned site to provide leisure facilities. Tory-controlled Tamworth has a scheme for the modernisation of a housing estate. Tory-controlled Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire has a scheme for major renovation works to a block of flats and the provision of new dwellings. Tory-controlled Wyre in Lancashire has a scheme for the renovation of a windmill——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I will not give way at the moment. I can assure the hon. Lady that I will give way, but not at the moment. I heard the hon. Member for Lancaster say, "No, no, no" from a sedentary position when I referred to Tory-controlled authorities. Presumably at that point she did not realise that I was going to refer to one rather close to home.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: May I suggest that it is rather more sensible to do up a windmill, which has lasted since the 13th century, than to lease back parking meters or sell Labour-controlled town halls as some Labour-controlled councils are doing? That cannot conceivably be described as right.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with the hon. Lady's first point. The windmill renovation is a sensible project. However, it is a pity that the hon. Lady did not make those comments on 9 March when she almost certainly supported her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

As there is apparently some dispute or lack of knowledge about Tory-controlled local authorities, what about Tory-controlled St. Albans? It has a scheme for the exchange of land with North West Hertfordshire health authority to enable hospital expansion. Can we accept that Basingstoke is Tory-controlled? Will the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West accept that Bournemouth is Tory-controlled? Bournemouth has a redevelopment scheme for a major entertainments complex and car parking. Tory-controlled North Hertfordshire and South Bedfordshire have schemes——

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) intervened in the hon. Gentleman's speech. He may have noticed on that list, a copy of which I have received, Lancaster district council, which has no one party in overall control, has a scheme for housing improvement which has been caught by the system. Was the hon. Lady aware that that scheme was caught? If so, is she happy that housing in her constituency will not be improved?

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for finally springing the trap on the hon. Lady.

The reality is that the Secretary of State, as is often his wont, dived into the situation without the slightest idea of where he was going—without a scintilla of evidence to support his actions. He has been lambasted by Tory-controlled local authorities up and down the country and he is backing off fast. As is usual with his decisions, that is to be welcomed. Nevertheless, we shall have to read much of the small print of what he has said, because we are still not convinced that the criteria he seeks to employ are as fair and as objective as he has implied tonight.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am deeply concerned about the contents of the new clauses. I do not consider myself bound to support them in the Lobbies tonight. They are new clauses tabled towards the end of debates on an important Bill. I am an honorary vice-president of the Association of District Councils, and I have received much of the briefing material to which Opposition Members have referred. I have also had a lengthy meeting with my own Macclesfield borough council, which is one of the few in the north-west having overall Conservative control. Sadly, my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) could not be there, but he has been subsequently fully briefed. The new clauses will adversely affect a well-managed authority in the north-west of England, which is Tory-controlled and which, over the past 10 years, has achieved the lowest rate precept rise in the whole of Cheshire. It is often accused of penny pinching, and yet some of the most necessary and vital projects currently being planned by that authority are being jeopardised as a result of the new clauses.

My right hon. Friend has received a letter from me, and he has paid me the courtesy of responding personally because his Department has not had time to prepare a detailed reply. I shall listen to the Front Bench response to this short debate before deciding what I shall do in the Division Lobbies. However, I must tell my right hon. Friend that, as matters currently stand, I shall be voting against the new clauses. I believe that they will be very damaging to many responsible, well-managed authorities. I say to my right hon. Friend that there are also some well-managed Labour authorities. One or two of them are close to my constituency in Cheshire, in the Greater Manchester area, and it is wrong that authorities which have shown themselves to be responsible should be treated in that way.

The technicalities of the proposed changes and my right hon. Friend's concessions are complex—but, in short, they will bring further types of transactions within what I can only describe as already restricted control, whereas they were previously considered a legitimate supplement to the use of capital receipts. The need for such a supplement is illustrated by the extent of the permissible borrowing approval allowed by the Government to the Macclesfield borough council. For all non-housing projects—such as car parks, pedestrianisation, public lavatories and pavilions—the council's allocation is in the region of £387,000, to which may be added a percentage—30 per cent., as my right hon. Friend knows—of capital receipts. That latter aspect adds a further sum, averaging £500,000, to the amont of money that my borough council can spend.

The council's current allocation for its housing improvement programme of £1·4 million is reducing and, even with capital receipts, that programme—which is much needed, much in demand and well planned—must be constantly rephased, with the result that projects are delayed. I shall quickly spell out several of those projects, though as a result of the relaxations my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

has made tonight, one or two of them may be allowed to proceed. First, Macclesfield borough council has an ambition to create centralised headquarters. The benefits deriving from increased efficiency, better communication and avoidance of duplication are widely recognised—as I hope they will be by my right hon. Friend's Department.

In addition, a number of the council's existing offices in various parts of the town are in poor condition and require considerable capital expenditure if they are to be put into a reasonable state. Work on that scheme has proceeded for more than 12 months and we are within a week or two of the final submission of offers from the private sector. The scheme involves a commercial element, the value of which would be offset against the cost of offices. That value will now score under the proposed restrictions.

I turn to another important matter that relates also to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton. Our area has tremendous potential for economic growth and there is great pressure for new car parking, if that potential is to be fully exploited. In Macclesfield, the council has already agreed a lease and leaseback transaction to provide funding in due course for the Jordan Gate scheme. It is unlikely to be funded in the foreseeable future in any other way.

In Wilmslow, in the Tatton constituency, the Church street scheme is a proposed barter deal, where the freehold of the land for development will be exchanged for a decked car park, providing an additional 100 spaces in Wilmslow town centre. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton and I know the area very well, and that development is vital if the area is to react to the demands placed upon it and to exploit fully its potential.

In Macclesfield, again, there is a proposal for the Churchill way scheme, containing a mixture of lease and leaseback, together with barter, which would provide much-needed parking spaces in the town centre. I say to any right hon. or hon. Member who does not know Macclesfield—and there may be many of them—that it is currently choking to death with cars, particularly at weekends, because there are inadequate parking facilities. With the growth of commercial development, there is demand for it. The Duke street scheme would provide 800 parking spaces under a leaseback arrangement.

It was intended to achieve a much-needed opening up of land in East Titherington by a development agreement with the private sector, encouraged by my right hon. Friend; again, there would be an element of barter and exchange for provision of costly infrastructure. That scheme is now in jeopardy.

I turn to another vital area, and it is one that my right hon. Friend may admit falls within the concessions that he made. It concerns a serious problem that arises in relation to Airey houses in the Macclesfield borough council. It is a matter with which both my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton and myself are concerned. Last year, we received numerous inquiries from tenants of these houses asking about their future. I have many Airey properties in my constituency, in the villages of Bosley, Poynton, Adlington, Lyme Green, Rainow, Lower Withington and Nether Alderley. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton has such houses in Tabley.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am utterly convinced by the case which the hon. Gentleman is making, but did he actually explain it to the Minister prior to his announcement on 9 March, or did he do so afterwards?

Mr. Winterton: I must tell the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that, initially, I was totally unaware that my council would be caught in that way. Indeed, I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Minister was also unaware, but he has been fair enough to say so from the Dispatch Box. Subsequently, I have naturally taken a deep interest in the matter, having served in local government for a number of years.

If I may return to the subject of Airey houses, after much tenant consultation, the council proposes, subject to planning difficulties and considerations, to demolish the Airey houses. It will do so in an interesting way, replacing them with other houses under a partnership arrangement with builders in the private sector, using private finance for the initial construction.

Tenants wishing to do so will be able to acquire their new houses at the discounted rate subject to the cost-floor provision. Those unable or not wishing to buy will continue to live in a property of their choice as secure tenants of Macclesfield borough council. Thus, the council will have to buy the properties at cost from the developer. Any remaining properties in the various locations will be sold on the open market.

8.30 pm

The proposals prior to my right hon. Friend's announcement would have enabled the council to set off 100 per cent. of sales income against the cost of acquiring properties for continued renting. That would minimise the impact on the council's housing improvement payment allocation of just £1·4 million for 1988-89. The understanding of the new arrangement requires the cost of providing the accommodation for renting to score as prescribed expenditure. This will be between £2 million and £3 million, depending on how many tenants exercise the right to buy. I am sure that I do not need to explain further to my right hon. Friend or the House how the measures in the new clauses and amendment that we are debating will adversely affect the very sound and prudent policy being implemented by my local authority.

I sometimes find it difficult to understand the Treasury when it is seeking to limit the expenditure of capital receipts. The Treasury says that it will be bad for the PSBR if that is not done, but we no longer have any problem with the PSBR, because the position is currently negative. If my right hon. Friend believes in local government, as I certainly do, he should say so, but if the Government do not believe in it any longer, they should say that it is no longer wanted. However, if we want well-managed local authorities such as mine and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton, they should be encouraged and not kicked in the shins for managing not only their assets, but the local government functions for all those who live in the district.

I hope that the concessions made tonight will allow many of the proposals that I have outlined, if not all, to go forward, because they have been properly planned and properly financed. My local authority is not trying to bridge a short-term revenue problem by selling capital assets; it is trying to provide better facilities and a better

infrastructure for all the people in the Macclesfield borough area, the vast majority of whom are Conservative supporters.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): As the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said, the new clauses have come forward very late in our proceedings. It is particularly unfortunate that we did not have the opportunity to scrutinise them in Committee.

I shall ask a specific question, which I hope will be answered by the Minister who winds up the debate. In view of the new clauses and the announcement made by the Secretary of State, I should like to know how a council will be affected if an agreement was concluded before 9 March. What I want to raise, and would have raised in Committee had it been possible, is the effect on schemes in the pipeline. There are different stages in the progress on an agreement. I appreciate that, as the Secretary of State explained, there will be some concessions; that he will look at particular schemes, and perhaps exempt them from the constraints of the new clauses. Nevertheless, I should like to know the answer to my question.

Let us suppose that a council concluded an agreement before 9 March, and it was signed, sealed but not delivered —in the sense that it had not taken effect, so that the land had not been transferred, although the agreement to do so had been made. The council, of course, would have done that in the confident belief that it was acting according to the law, as it existed before 9 March. It would have received no indication that the Secretary of State intended to change the law. Would the council be able to proceed without the scheme having been scored against its capital expenditure?

Mr. Ridley: The answer is yes. If any commitment had been undertaken, any money had been expended or any design work had been done, as I said in my speech, the scheme would clearly be in the pipeline.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) deliberately misled the House. I have now ascertained——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Lady did not intend to say that an hon. Member had deliberately misled the House. Will she please withdraw her remark and rephrase it?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I shall withdraw it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall say that the hon. Gentleman accidentally misled the House. The Marsh mill at Thornton is not, and never has been, on a leaseback system. It is in the capital programme, and has in no way been impeded by the action of the Government. I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman will get his facts rather straighter when discussing my borough council.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a point for debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Davis: As I was saying before that intervention, I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his assurance. I shall therefore conclude my remarks. I see no point in taking up debating time in pursuing it further. The Secretary of State has given us a wide assurance in telling us that schemes that were only in the design stage, as opposed to the agreement stage, would be exempt from the restrictions, and I am grateful for that assurance.

Mr. Speller: I shall not detain the House for long. I was grateful for a helpful comment from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and wish to develop only two points, which may affect not only my area but other areas in the more rural parts of the west country.

First, let me say that there is dismay and consternation among good local authorities which see perfectly well the reasons to stop what might be called less intelligent councils from seeking ways around logical Government control on excessive capital expenditure. Councils such as mine—the North Devon and Mid-Devon district councils —accept that entirely, and are in no way against the principle. Nor, indeed, am I.

The danger comes when the relatively low-spending and low-resource authorities without a large ratepaying base seek a substantial development that involves occasional major expenditure, perhaps once or twice in 10 years. It is then that they are scared of being—as they would put it—capped.

My other point goes beyond that. We need to extend the harbour and build at Ilfracombe, and the only way that we can finance that development is by using a developer's cash on our council land. I hope that there is no problem here. It is a one-off, and we hope for exemption from control on such capital expenditure. However, on the hills behind Ilfracombe we have a hydro plant and what we hope will be a large wind farm to produce for the generating board. We shall have problems there if we are not permitted to reduce rates and exchange land for development. It will involve a big development and big expenditure.

I merely ask my right hon. Friend to think kindly of authorities that have no intention of excessive spending, but which occasionally have to engage in work for which their rate-borne income could never provide. I ask my right hon. Friend to treat those authorities well. They are not trying to swap or to cheat. They are merely seeking to use their assets in a sensible, logical manner, for the economic benefit of their communities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: This has been a strange debate. First, it is clear that it is a debate about barter deals and not about leaseback. That will come later. Secondly, the Secretary of State effectively came to the House to admit that he had been taken by surprise by his own announcement. The policy of the Government had turned round, as it were, and bitten the hand that feeds it. The Government have become used in the past to making decisions first and asking questions later, but in this instance they announced the decision, made the inquiries later, and then suddenly discovered what horrible things they had done. There is, however, the consolation that perhaps occasionally messages get through.

Let us look at some of the headlines that have appeared in the specialist press in the past few weeks. *Surveyor* of 7 April has the headline

"Tories attack barter deal ban".

The magazine *Building*, on 8 April, stated:

"Housebuilders rage against end of council barter deals".

The article below the headline began:

"Construction of 50,000 homes a year could be scuppered and inner city regeneration project wrecked if Government proposals to end land deals between councils and contractors go ahead."

Later in the article, the director of the House-Builders Federation is quoted as saying:

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

"The Government must realise that this is a standard way of doing business, particularly in the inner cities. This could scupper as much as 25 per cent. of the housebuilding programme. If they made a mistake on this one, they could have shot the whole inner city drive in the foot".

A headline in *Surveyor* on 21 April was:

"Housing for elderly and disabled under threat from Finance Bill".

The finance officer of the Association of District Councils said:

"While the Secretary of State clearly aimed at ending the excesses of a few, he has really gone too far and is putting in jeopardy a large number of schemes".

The *Financial Times* of today said:

"Nearly 150 district council projects worth more than £350 million may have to be abandoned . . . The schemes range in value from under £1 million to a £45 million housing development in Oxford and a £40 million redevelopment of Bournemouth's Pavilion entertainments centre."

We could give many examples. Yet again, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) showed that the evidence is contrary to what the Government thought. On some matters, the councils have done just what the Government asked. Tower Hamlets, which my colleagues control, has been trying to find money for more housing for the homeless. If it had suggested a scheme exactly on these lines, it would have been caught by the ban. I should be interested to know whether my own council of Southwark would be caught. It has not started actual work on such schemes, but if they are precluded, all that Southwark will be able to do is sell land for cash and spend 20 or 30 per cent. of the capital receipts.

That seems to fly in the face of Government policy. Other people have said that the Government's policy—whether we in the Opposition like it or not, we have to accept it—is that partnership deals with local authorities are what is required and that councils should work with the private sector and come to the best arrangements for them and the communities. Barter deals are not mortgages of the future as leaseback is—that is a different issue. They do not involve a cost to the ratepayers, because they are assessed as valuable in themselves. They offend against capital controls technically, but not fundamentally in terms of economic policy.

We do not expect the Secretary of State to apply his new concessions to every scheme. The Government entered this area of policy, like the poll tax, with the same motivation, saying, "The Government must control everything, no matter what local councils decide." The Government have now realised that that was a foolish way forward.

In the past year, many barter schemes have come before the Secretary of State. Many local authorities have asked him to confirm that one or other barter scheme is legal. Such schemes appeared then to be legal, and it appears that the Government have now accepted that they should be. I hope that the reality behind the concessions, which we welcome, is that in the event all such schemes that are good will be allowed through and eventually the Government will have the good grace to admit that they made a terrible mistake and that, quite often, local government knows what it is doing.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): On Report, once or twice I have supported the principle of a clause but have been worried about the implications of the wording. I am in that position again tonight. I very much welcome the concessions announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, especially the promise of consultation before new regulations are introduced.

As my right hon. Friend stated in his announcement on 9 March, the reason is to catch

"a minority of local authorities . . . employing artificial devices to incur capital expenditure and to undertake borrowing over and above the levels permitted to them". —[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 326.]

I concur with that objective, but I fear that the legislation is drafted so widely that it will catch many worthwhile schemes across the country, as we have heard from other hon. Members in the debate.

8.45 pm

It is true that certain local authorities have used the present regulations to fund revenue deficits, using schemes such as mortgaging municipal buildings and selling off parking meters to meet current expenditure, but most local authorities, certainly my own in Exeter, have adhered strictly to the law and the intention of the law. In Exeter, we have six schemes that are affected by the revised rules. All of them relate to matters of a capital nature. They all enjoy all-party local support. They are supported by commercial interests and are generally intended for the enhancement, improvement and future prosperity of the city and the area. There is no adverse effect on the ratepayers of the city, which has the lowest district rate in Devon. It is difficult to see why those much-needed schemes, which I should like to describe, should not go ahead without delay and without undue bureaucratic delay by officials.

I look forward to looking more closely at the details of the changes announced tonight. The legislation as presently drafted appears to have been produced in haste and, in my view, needs to be withdrawn for further consideration and amendment.

The first scheme that has been affected by the revised rules concerns the relocation of the livestock market in Exeter. Exeter is not just a regional centre for administration and shopping, but it is an important centre in a large agricultural county. The city council owns and operates a thriving livestock market in a partnership arrangement with a private sector consortium of market auctioneers. The market has been on its present site since the 1930s and is now inadequate by reason of its location, its means of access and its size. It also fails to meet present-day standards of hygiene and convenience of operation.

The council, in full consultation with all interested parties and following a consultant's report, has decided to relocate the market to a new site, which the council owns. It is a complicated and costly project, estimated to cost £4·04 million. It enjoys total support from all parties in the area. It is supported by the Devon Member of the European Parliament, the market auctioneers and the National Farmers Union. The value of the existing site for redevelopment is sufficient to fund the scheme, but the existing site cannot be sold until the new market has been built. In August last year the council entered into an agreement with a merchant bank for the funding of the works in a manner that clearly did not give rise to prescribed expenditure under the law as it then stood, save for a small part of the cost, which would be funded directly by the council. The council has agreed terms for the sale of the existing site to a developer for a sum sufficient to meet the entire costs of the project. An application has been

made for an EEC grant, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Member of the European Parliament, and is now at an advanced stage in its progress at Brussels.

The whole scheme may be in jeopardy, depending upon the correct interpretation of new clause 11, subsections (6) and (8), and upon the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The essential point is that the agreement to construct the new market was made before 10 March 1988 and the new section will come into force as from that date. Consideration, not in money, was given for the works prior to 10 March and although the work has commenced, a considerable amount remains to be done. I must ask for the reiteration of the assurance that works carried out after 10 March, pursuant to a legally binding agreement made before that date, are not intended to be caught by new clause 11. It would be wholly unreasonable for retrospective legislation to make unlawful work that is contractually committed by an agreement made perfectly lawfully prior to 10 March. I ask for a specific assurance on that point. There is no option as such to be exercised, but there is a mechanism whereby, as the project develops, the council has to produce building contracts, which the bank enters into as we go along.

One other area of great concern in my constituency of Exeter and in other parts of the country is that we should provide sufficient car parking spaces in the central areas of the city, particularly for shoppers and tourists visiting it. That view is endorsed by the chamber of commerce and trade and the English tourist board. It should be borne in mind that a city such as Exeter is the centre of a huge tourist region. It is also a major shopping centre. It is now faced with the challenge of several regional shopping centre proposals on the outskirts of the city, where there will be a generous provision of car parking. The Secretary of State is due to determine later in the year several planning appeals and applications for those out-of-town shopping centres.

To enhance the car parking provision in the central areas, the council has proposed three schemes for the provision of new car parks. It has been decided to grant a 125-year lease for office development of council-owned land adjacent to the civic offices on terms requiring the developer to construct a 290-space car park for the council. The important point is that the council will not receive a money consideration. The value of the lease will be set—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) wish to make an intervention? He is interrupting constantly.

Mr. Douglas: We have had special pleading after special pleading by Conservative Members who voted for the introduction of the guillotine for the various stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament. I find that reprehensible.

Mr. Hannam: Having spoken for six minutes and having listened to speeches of almost interminable length from Opposition Members, I take grave offence at that sort of comment. I am outlining the important——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Hannam: I shall not give way again during the remainder of my remarks. After the intervention of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, I realise that it would be unwise to allow another intervention and thereby prolong the debate.

I wish to continue—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West keep quiet or seek to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair and make his own speech? He is lowering the tone of the debate. An hon. Member was removed from the Chamber for making numerous interjections in a similar manner to that being adopted by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West. I hope that we shall not reach that position tonight. It is virtually impossible to make a speech when there are constant interjections.

The issues that I am raising are of great relevance and I press my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to take note of them. I can do without the interjections that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West is making from a sedentary position. I do not know whether it is the custom north of the border——

Mr. Douglas: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hannam: No, I shall not give way. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to intervene once, and I think that in the interests of time it would be worth while if I continued with my speech. I am trying to advance some serious arguments.

The effect of the Bill will be to draw in a range of proposals from local authorities, including Exeter, that would not incur extra expenditure for the ratepayers. No loss of capital would be involved. The technical provisions of a hastily drafted clause mean that the local council in my constituency is faced with the prospect of proceeding with schemes that are in the pipeline, or schemes which have been carefully formulated, or withdrawing them. If it proceeds with the schemes and it is found that they are not eligible within the framework that we are considering, the council will find that it is necessary to lower expenditure on other worthwhile schemes.

If the schemes that the council proceeds with are found not to be falling within the letter of the law and they are withdrawn, many important projects such as car parking, the development of leisure facilities, the provision of a new shopping centre and the development of the county ground where the county show is held each year might have to be put into cold storage at a time when there is a desperate need for them to be implemented.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State replies he will give further details of the concessions that have been announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The debate on the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 will provide ample opportunity for Opposition Members to voice their opinions. In that debate we could further discuss the various concessions and announcements that have been made by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks: I shall be brief because I hope to be able to speak again on these matters when we discuss the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 after the Bill has been given a Third Reading.

If the Secretary of State had any sense of shame, he would apologise to the House for the way in which he inadvertently misled it during his announcement on 9 March. We know that that was not done with malice

[Mr. Tony Banks]

aforethought. It happened because he did not know the facts, but that is something that we have come to expect from the right hon. Gentleman. He stumbles around like some poor old derelict from one balls-up to another. He should re-read what was said on 9 March. I shall not spare the Secretary of State's blushes, because it is clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) knows so much more than he about what goes on in local government. My hon. Friend said:

"May I ask the Secretary of State to reconsider his announcement that these amendments will be presented to the House only on Report?"

The Secretary of State's response suggested that he knew all about this at the time, but he now confesses that he knew nothing when he was making his announcement. He said:

"Since the hon. Gentleman appears to be going to support the new amendments that I have said will be tabled, I cannot think why he wants such a great deal of time in which to debate them".—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 335-36.]

We wanted time because we wanted to get things right. The Secretary of State has still not achieved that, and he should be ashamed of himself. At least he should apologise to the House before we move on at 9 pm.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been criticised for having announced important changes to the capital control regime on 9 March without having consultation beforehand. My right hon. Friend was right to take that course because experience shows that local authorities, when we have consulted before making an announcement, have taken advantage of the consultation period to take action to avoid consequences of the controls that we have sought to introduce.

In October 1986—*[Interruption.]* This may not be within the recollection of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who continues to interrupt. In October 1986, we announced our intention to bring the acquisition of vehicles, plant and machinery within the prescribed expenditure with effect from 1 April 1987. We subsequently consulted local government about the regulations to bring this into effect. Between the time of that announcement and the new regulations, local authorities entered into nearly £2 billion-worth of advance leasing deals. Many of the deals were rushed through in the laying period for the regulations. Recent reports have shown how imprudent some of the deals were. Some of the brokers who arranged them did not work out correctly the tax consequences and some authorities are now faced with substantial additional costs. Our approach in this instance is preferable to that which we adopted in October 1986.

The pipeline concession will make a great deal of difference and will go a long way to meet the anxieties which have been expressed. When the criteria are satisfied —when there is a commitment, there is no net increase in the stock of assets and it is not sought to raise money on the security of assets—the pipeline concession will apply. My hon. Friends the Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) spoke about the way in which the controls will affect small councils. It is worth emphasising the way in which we already take account of the position of small district councils by——

Dr. Cunningham: Does the Minister recall the letters of Councillor Cowd, the Conservative leader of Merton borough council, to *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*? He will be aware that Merton was involved in one of the schemes. Councillor Cowd wrote that Merton's scheme was

"to unlock the authority's equity in its very substantial property holdings . . . the sum generated would have been actively invested to create income for the benefit of the owners of those assets, the borough's ratepayers."

That is what authorities have been doing throughout the country. Does not the Minister agree that that is sensible investment? His friend at Merton seems to think that it is.

Mr. Chope: I shall not comment on the Merton scheme.

The concessions that have been announced this evening by my right hon. Friend will apply to many schemes. I hope that there will be an opportunity for the points to be discussed in detail with departmental officials when necessary. My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter raised some of those points. He has been told quite clearly that the schemes in Exeter that were in the pipeline before the announcement on 9 March will certainly not be affected by the changes. The same is probably true of some of the Macclesfield schemes. They will satisfy some of the criteria to which my right hon. Friend has referred. The same is true also in relation to north Devon schemes that satisfy the criteria that have been announced by my right hon. Friend. As other hon. Members have said, there may be an opportunity later this evening to discuss some of these points in more detail.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

It being nine o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question on amendments moved by a member of the Government up to the end of the Bill.*

New clause 11

PRESCRIBED EXPENDITURE

'(1) In the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (in this section referred to as "the 1980 Act"), in section 71 (expenditure to which Part VIII of the 1980 Act applies) for subsection (2) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) Where any of the activities specified in paragraph 1 Schedule 12 to this Act is undertaken by or for an authority, then, subject to paragraphs 2 to 5 of that Schedule, the amount of expenditure which,—

(a) by virtue of sections 79A to 80B below, the authority is to be taken to incur on that activity, or

(b) in a case not falling within those sections, the authority actually incurs on that activity,

is prescribed expenditure for the purposes of this Part of this Act."

(2) In section 80 of the 1980 Act (which determines the amount of expenditure which is to be taken to be incurred where an interest in or right over property is acquired) for subsection (4) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(4) Where the acquisition is, or is treated by virtue of section 79A above as being, the acquisition of the simple absolute in possession and subsection (3) above does not apply, the amount is the consideration in money which would be obtained for that fee simple if it were sold on the open market by a willing seller at the time of the acquisition; and in determining, for the purpose of calculating that amount, to what interests and rights the fee simple is at that time subject—

(a) where section 79A applies there shall be taken into account only those mentioned in subsection (2) of that section; and

(b) there shall be left out of account those arising by virtue of a mortgage or charge to secure the payment of money."

(3) In subsection (5) of the said section 80 for paragraph (a) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"(a) the acquisition, though treated by virtue of section 79A above as the acquisition of a fee simple, is in fact the acquisition of a leasehold interest in land; and"

(4) In subsection (8) of the said section 80 for the words "right to occupy" there shall be substituted "right to possession or occupation of".

(5) Subsection (14) of the said section 80 shall be omitted.

(6) In section 80A of the 1980 Act (payment for works carried out for an authority) in subsection (5) (value of works at any time) at the end of paragraph (b) there shall be added "and

(c) the value of any consideration which is not in money and which has been or is to be given by the authority for the carrying out of the works".

(7) In subsection (9) of the said section 80A (works treated as carried out for an authority in cases specified in or determined under regulations) after the words "subsection (1)" there shall be inserted "and section 71(2)".

(8) This section shall be deemed to have come into force on 10th March 1988.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 12

SHARE AND LOAN CAPITAL AND GUARANTEE PAYMENTS

'(1) In the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (in this section referred to as "the 1980 Act"), in Schedule 12 (prescribed expenditure under Part VIII), in paragraph 1, in sub-paragraph (f) the final "and" shall be omitted and at the end of sub-paragraph (g) there shall be added—

"(h) the acquisition of share capital or loan capital (within the meaning of section 78 of the Finance Act 1986) of any body corporate which is not an authority to which this Part of this Act applies, and

(i) the making of payments pursuant to an obligation arising under a guarantee of indemnity given with respect to money borrowed by any person".

(2) At the end of paragraph 3 of the said Schedule 12 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"3A. The reference in paragraph 3 above to a county council includes a reference to any district council or other body in whom, by virtue of an order under any provision of Part VII of the Local Government Act 1985, there is for the time being vested a superannuation fund which, before the abolition date, within the meaning of that Act, was maintained by the Greater London Council or a metropolitan county council as mentioned in section 60 of that Act."

(3) With respect to expenditure on the matters specified in paragraphs (h) and (i) of paragraph 1 of the said Schedule 12 (as amended by subsection (1) above), the powers conferred by paragraph 4 of that Schedule (to provide by regulations that certain expenditure which would otherwise be prescribed expenditure shall not be such expenditure) may be exercised so as to have effect with respect to expenditure incurred (or treated by virtue of any provision of Part VIII of the 1980 Act as incurred) on or after 10th March 1988.

(4) In section 75 of the 1980 Act (capital receipts) the power conferred by subsection (5)(d) (to provide that certain assets are brought within the scope of the section) may be exercised with respect to disposals on or after 10 March 1988 of assets acquired on or after that date in cases where, by virtue of the amendments made by subsection (1) above, expenditure on the acquisition of the assets is prescribed expenditure; and, with respect to capital receipts resulting from such disposals, the powers conferred by sections 72(3)(d) and 75(5)(a) of that Act (which relate to the prescribed proportion of an authority's capital receipts) may be similarly exercised.

(5) In section 80 of the 1980 Act (valuation)—

(a) in subsections (9) and (10) (which relate to the acquisition of the property in goods or an interest or right in goods) after the word "goods", in each place where it occurs, there shall be inserted "share capital or loan capital"; and—

(b) at the end of subsection (15) (definition of "property" for subsections (9) and (10)) there shall be added the words "and loan capital has the same meaning as in section 78 of the Finance Act 1986".

(6) Subsections (1), (2) and (5) above shall be deemed to have come into force on 10 March 1988.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*.

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Schedule

'COMMUNITY CHARGES: ENFORCEMENT

PART I

INTRODUCTION

1.—(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations in relation to the recovery of—

(a) any sum which has become payable to an authority under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 above and has not been paid;

(b) any sum which has become payable to an authority under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 3 of that Schedule and has not been paid;

(c) any sum which has become payable to a chargeable person under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 4 of that Schedule and has not been paid;

(d) any sum which has become payable (by way of repayment) to a person other than an authority under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 2 or 3 of that Schedule and has not been paid;

(e) any sum which has become payable (by way of repayment) to a contributor under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 4 of that Schedule and has not been paid;

(f) any sum which has become payable to an authority under any provision included in regulations under paragraph 6 of Schedule 3 above and has not been paid.

(2) References in sub-paragraph (1) above to a sum which has become payable and has not been paid include references to a sum forming part of a larger sum which has become payable and the other part of which has been paid.

PART II

CHARGES: SOLE LIABILITY

Preliminary

2. This Part of this Schedule applies as regards the recovery of any sum falling within paragraph 1(1)(a) above.

Liability orders

3.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that —

(a) the authority concerned may apply to a magistrates' court for an order (a liability order) against the person by whom the sum is payable;

(b) the magistrates' court shall make the order if it is satisfied that the sum has become payable by the person concerned and has not been paid.

(2) The regulations may include provision that the order shall be made in respect of an amount equal to the aggregate of—

(a) the sum payable, and

(b) a sum (of an amount determined in accordance with prescribed rules) in respect of the costs incurred in obtaining the order.

(3) The regulations may include—

(a) provision that no application may be made after a prescribed period has expired;

(b) provision prescribing the procedure to be followed for the initiation of an application (which may

include provision as to notices and as to form);
(c) provision prescribing the procedure to be followed in dealing with an application;
(d) provision prescribing the form and contents of an order.

Information

4.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that where a magistrates' court has made a liability order against a person (the debtor) he shall, during such time as the amount in respect of which the order was made remains wholly or partly unpaid, be under a duty to supply relevant information to the charging authority concerned.

(2) Relevant information is such information as fulfils the following conditions—
(a) it is in the debtor's possession or control,
(b) the charging authority requests him to supply it, and
(c) it falls within a prescribed description of information and relates to the debtor's employment and earnings.

(3) The regulations may include provision that the information is to be supplied in a prescribed form and within a prescribed period of the request being made.

Attachment of earnings

5.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that where a magistrates' court has made a liability order against a person (the debtor)—
(a) the authority concerned may make an order (an attachment of earnings order) to secure the payment of any outstanding sum which is or forms part of the amount in respect of which the liability order was made,
(b) such an order shall be expressed to be directed to a person who has the debtor in his employment, and shall operate as an instruction to such a person to make deductions from the debtor's earnings and to pay the amounts deducted to the authority,
(c) the authority may serve a copy of the order on a person who appears to the authority to have the debtor in his employment, and
(d) a person who has the debtor in his employment shall comply with the order if a copy of it is served on him.

(2) The regulations may include—
(a) provision allowing an attachment of earnings order to be varied;
(b) provision requiring a person who has the debtor in his employment to comply with the order as varied if a copy of the order as varied is served on him;
(c) provision requiring an order to be in a prescribed form;
(d) provision requiring an order to specify the sum to which the order relates, the rate at which the debtor's earnings are to be applied to meet the sum, and such other particulars as may be prescribed;
(e) rules about the rate which may be so specified;
(f) provision allowing the person who deducts and pays amounts under the order to deduct from the debtor's earnings prescribed sums towards his administrative costs;
(g) provision requiring the person who deducts and pays amounts under the order to notify the debtor, in a prescribed manner and at any prescribed time, of the total amount of sums (including sums towards administrative costs) deducted up to the time of the notification;
(h) provision requiring any person on whom a copy of the order is served to notify the authority in a prescribed manner and within a prescribed period if he does not have the debtor in his employment or the debtor subsequently ceases to be in his employment;
(i) provision that, where the whole amount to which the order relates has been paid, the authority shall give notice of that fact to any person who appears to it to have the debtor in his employment and who has been served with a copy of the order;
(j) provision allowing or requiring an order to be discharged.

(3) The regulations may include provision that while an attachment of earnings order is in force—
(a) the debtor shall from time to time notify the authority concerned, in a prescribed manner and within a prescribed period, of each occasion when he leaves any employment or becomes employed or re-employed, and shall include in such a notification a statement of his earnings and expected earnings from the employment concerned and of such other matters as may be prescribed;
(b) any person who becomes the debtor's employer and knows that the order is in force and by what authority it was made shall notify the authority concerned, in a prescribed manner, and within a prescribed period, that he is the debtor's employer, and shall include in such a notification a statement of the debtor's earnings and expected earnings from the employment concerned and of such other matters as may be prescribed.

(4) The regulations may include provision with respect to the priority to be accorded as between—
(a) two or more orders made under the regulations;
(b) orders made under the regulations and orders made under the Attachment of Earnings Act 1971.

Distress

6.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that where a magistrates' court has made a liability order against a person (the debtor) the authority concerned may levy the appropriate amount by distress and sale of the debtor's goods.

(2) The appropriate amount is the aggregate of—
(a) an amount equal to any outstanding sum which is or forms part of the amount in respect of which the liability order was made, and
(b) a sum (of an amount determined in accordance with prescribed rules) in respect of the charges connected with the distress.

(3) The regulations may include provision that—
(a) a distress may be made anywhere in England and Wales;
(b) a distress shall not be deemed unlawful on account of any defect or want of form in the liability order and no person making a distress shall be deemed a trespasser on that account;
(c) no person making a distress shall be deemed a trespasser from the beginning on account of any subsequent irregularity in making the distress, but a person sustaining special damage by reason of the irregularity may recover full satisfaction for the special damage (and no more) by proceedings in trespass or otherwise.

Commitment to prison

7.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that—
(a) where an authority has sought to levy an amount by distress under any provision included under paragraph 6 above, the debtor is an individual, and it appears to the authority that no (or insufficient) goods of the debtor can be found on which to levy the amount, the authority may apply to a magistrates' court for the issue of a warrant committing the debtor to prison;
(b) on such application being made the court shall (in the debtor's presence) inquire as to his means and inquire whether the failure to pay which led to the liability order being made was due to his wilful refusal or culpable neglect;
(c) if (and only if) the court is of opinion that his failure was due to his wilful refusal or culpable neglect it may if it thinks fit issue a warrant of commitment against the debtor, or fix a term of imprisonment and postpone the issue of the warrant until such time and on such conditions (if any) as the court thinks just;
(d) the warrant shall be made in respect of the relevant amount (within the meaning given by sub-paragraph (2) below);
(e) the warrant shall state that amount;
(f) the order in the warrant shall be that the debtor be imprisoned for a time specified in the warrant (which shall not exceed 3 months), unless the amount stated in the warrant is sooner paid;

(g) the period of imprisonment shall be reduced by a prescribed amount in respect of part payment in prescribed circumstances;

(h) a warrant may be directed to the authority concerned and to such other persons (if any) as the court issuing it thinks fit;

(i) a warrant may be executed anywhere in England and Wales by any person to whom it is directed

(2) The relevant amount is the aggregate of—

(a) an amount equal to the appropriate amount within the meaning of paragraph 6 above or (as the case may be) to so much of it as remains outstanding, and

(b) a sum (of an amount determined in accordance with prescribed rules) in respect of the costs of commitment.

(3) The regulations may include—

(a) provision that a single warrant shall not be issued, under any provision included under this paragraph, against more than one person;

(b) provision as to the form of a warrant;

(c) provision allowing remission of payment where no warrant is issued or term of imprisonment fixed;

(d) provision allowing an application to be renewed where no warrant is issued or term of imprisonment fixed;

(e) provision that a statement in writing to the effect that wages of any amount have been paid to the debtor during any period, purporting to be signed by or on behalf of his employer, shall be evidence of the facts there stated;

(f) provision that, for the purpose of enabling inquiry to be made as to the debtor's conduct and means, a justice of the peace may issue a summons to him to appear before a magistrates' court and (if he does not obey the summons) may issue a warrant for his arrest;

(g) provision that, for the purpose of enabling such inquiry, a justice of the peace may issue a warrant for the debtor's arrest without issuing a summons;

(h) provision as to the execution of a warrant for arrest (which may include provision allowing it to be executed anywhere in England and Wales).

Charging orders

8.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that where a magistrates' court has made a liability order against a person (the debtor), the charge concerned is a collective community charge, and prescribed conditions are fulfilled—

(a) the authority concerned may apply to a court for an order (a charging order) imposing, on any interest held by the debtor beneficially in the designated dwelling concerned, a charge for securing the due amount, and

(b) a charge imposed by a charging order shall have the like effect and shall be enforceable in the same courts and in the same manner as an equitable charge created by the debtor by writing under his hand.

(2) The due amount is the aggregate of—

(a) an amount equal to any outstanding sum which is or forms part of the amount in respect of which the liability order was made, and

(b) a sum (of an amount determined in accordance with prescribed rules) in respect of costs connected with the charging order.

(3) The regulations may include provision—

(a) as to the court to which an application may be made (which may be the High Court or a county court);

(b) as to the factors to be considered by the court in deciding whether to make a charging order;

(c) requiring an order to specify the dwelling and interest concerned, and such other matters as may be prescribed;

(d) requiring an order to be in a prescribed form;

(e) allowing an order to be made absolutely or subject to conditions;

(f) as to the discharge or variation of an order.

Relationship between remedies

9. As regards a case where a magistrates' court has made a liability order, regulations under this Schedule may include provision that—

(a) attachment of earnings may be resorted to more than once;

(b) distress may be resorted to more than once;

(c) attachment of earnings and distress may be resorted to alternately;

(d) steps by way of attachment, distress, commitment or charging may not be taken while steps by way of another of those methods are being taken;

(e) where a warrant of commitment is issued against (or a term of imprisonment is fixed in the case of) the person concerned no steps, or no further steps, by way of attachment, distress or charging may be taken.

Magistrates and justices

10. Regulations under this Schedule may include—

(a) provision for determining what justices and magistrates' courts are to have jurisdiction in cases provided for by the regulations;

(b) provision as to the composition of magistrates' courts in cases provided for by the regulations.

PART III

CHARGES: JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY

11. This Part of this Schedule applies as regards the recovery of any sum falling within paragraph 1(1)(b) above.

12.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may make, as regards the recovery of such a sum, provision equivalent to that included under Part II of this Schedule subject to any modifications the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(2) In particular, the regulations may provide that where a sum is payable by a chargeable person and a spouse or manager (as the case may be)—

(a) a liability order may be made against the chargeable person alone, or against that person and the spouse or manager;

(b) a liability order may not be made against the spouse or manager alone;

(c) where a liability order has been made against both the chargeable person and the spouse or manager, an attachment of earnings order may be made against one of them or different attachment of earnings order may be made against each;

(d) where a liability order has been made against both, distress may be made against one of them or against each;

(e) where distress has been made against each, a warrant of commitment may be applied for against one of them or different warrants may be applied for against each;

(f) where distress has been made against the chargeable person only, a warrant of commitment may be applied for against that person;

(g) where a liability order has been made against both, a charging order may be made against one of them or different charging orders may be made against each.

(3) As regards a case where a magistrates' court has made a liability order against a chargeable person and a spouse, the regulations may include provision that a warrant of commitment may not be applied for against the spouse unless distress has been made against the chargeable person and it appears to the authority concerned that no (or insufficient) goods of that person can be found.

(4) As regards a case where a magistrates' court has made a liability order against a chargeable person and a spouse or manager, the regulations may include provision that—

(a) steps by way of attachment, distress or charging may not be taken against one while steps by way of the same method or another of those methods are being taken against the other;

(b) where a warrant of commitment is issued against (or a term of imprisonment is fixed in the case of) one of them no steps, or no further steps, by way of attachment, distress or charging may be taken against that one.

(5) In this paragraph "chargeable person", "spouse" and "manager" shall be construed in accordance with sections 16 and 17 above.

PART IV

CONTRIBUTIONS

13. This Part of this Schedule applies as regards the recovery of any sum falling within paragraph 1(1)(c) above.

14. Regulations under this Schedule may provide that any such sum shall be recoverable in the same way as rent or (depending on the terms of the regulations) shall be recoverable in a court of competent jurisdiction.

PART V

REPAYMENTS

15. This Part of this Schedule applies as regards the recovery of any sum falling within paragraph 1(1)(d) or (e) above.

16. Regulations under this Schedule may provide that any such sum shall be recoverable in a court of competent jurisdiction.

PART VI

PENALTIES

17. This Part of this Schedule applies as regards the recovery of any sum falling within paragraph 1(1)(f) above.

18.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may make, as regards the recovery of such a sum, provision equivalent to that included under Part II of this Schedule subject to any modifications the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(2) Provision as to penalties incurred under paragraph 2(8) to (11) of Schedule 3 above before 1 April 1990 may be included in regulations under this Schedule notwithstanding that no liability to pay amounts in respect of community charges arises before that date.

PART VII

GENERAL

Exclusion of certain matters

19. Regulations under this Schedule may provide that any matter which could be the subject of an appeal under section 22 above may not be raised in proceedings under the regulations.

Costs

20. Regulations under this Schedule may provide that where a charging authority has received in proceedings under the regulations an amount by way of costs it shall pay an amount (determined in accordance with prescribed rules) to a prescribed person for the benefit of such court as is identified in accordance with prescribed rules.

Termination of proceedings

21.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that in a case where—

(a) proceedings under the regulations have been taken as regards the recovery of any sum mentioned in paragraph 1(1) above, and

(b) the outstanding amount is paid or tendered to the person to whom it is payable,

that person shall accept the amount, no further steps shall be taken as regards its recovery, and any person committed to prison in pursuance of the proceedings shall be released.

(2) The outstanding amount is an amount equal to the sum concerned or to so much of it as remains outstanding (as the case may be).

(3) In a case where costs and charges are relevant the outstanding amount shall be treated as augmented by a sum (of an amount determined in accordance with prescribed rules) in respect of costs and charges incurred in the proceedings up to the time of payment or tender.

Offences

22.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that a person shall be guilty of an offence if he is required by any provision included under paragraph 4 above to supply information and—

(a) he fails without reasonable excuse to supply the information in accordance with the provision, or

(b) in supplying information in purported compliance with the provision he makes a statement which he knows to be false in a material particular or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular.

(2) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that—

(a) a person shall be guilty of an offence if he is required by any provision included under paragraph 5(1)(d) or (2)(b) above to comply with an attachment of earnings order and fails to do so;

(b) it shall be a defence for a person charged with such an offence to prove that he took all reasonable steps to comply with the order.

(3) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that a person shall be guilty of an offence if he is required by any provision included under paragraph 5(2)(g) or (h) or (3)(a) or (b) above to notify another person and—

(a) he fails without reasonable excuse to notify the other person in accordance with the provision, or

(b) in notifying the other person in purported compliance with the provision he makes a statement which he knows to be false in a material particular or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular.

(4) Regulations under this Schedule may provide that a person guilty of an offence under any provision included under sub-paragraphs (1) to (3) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding—

(a) level 2 on the standard scale (where the provision is included under sub-paragraph (1)(a) or (3)(a) above), or

(b) level 3 on the standard scale (where the provision is included under sub-paragraph (1)(b), (2) or (3)(b) above).

(5) References in this paragraph to any provision included under paragraph 4 or 5 above include references to any equivalent provision included under paragraph 12 or 18 above.

Other enactments

23.—(1) Regulations under this Schedule may apply any provision contained in or made under a relevant enactment, or may apply any such provision subject to prescribed modifications, or may contain provision equivalent to any such provision (whether or not subject to prescribed modifications).

(2) Relevant enactments are Part VI of the General Rate Act 1967, the Attachment of Earnings Act 1971, the Charging Orders Act 1979, and any enactment applied by any of those enactments.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Schedule

SOCIAL SECURITY

1. The Social Security Act 1986 shall be amended as mentioned in the following provisions of this Schedule.

2.—(1) Section 20 (income-related benefits) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In Subsection (1) the word "and" shall be omitted and at the end of the subsection there shall be inserted "and

(d) community charge benefits."

(3) After subsection (8) there shall be inserted—

"(8A) A person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a particular day falling after 31 March 1990 if each of the three conditions set out in subsections (8B) to (8E) below is fulfilled.

(8B) In relation to England and Wales, the first condition is that—

(a) on the day the person concerned is shown, in a charging authority's community charges register, as subject to a personal community charge of the authority and is not there shown as undertaking a full-time course of education on the day, or

(b) the day consists of or falls within a contribution period in respect of which the person concernd is liable to pay an amount under section 9 of the 1988 Act (collective community charge contributions).

(8C) In relation to Scotland, the first condition is that—

(a) in respect of the day the person concerned is shown, in a Community Charges Register, as being liable to pay the personal community charge and is not there shown as undertaking a full-time course of education on the day, or

(b) the day consists of or falls within a contribution period in respect of which the

person concerned is liable to pay a collective community charge contribution under section 11(11) of the 1987 Act.

(8D) The second condition is that there is an appropriate maximum community charge benefit in the case of the person concerned.

(8E) The third condition is that—

(a) the person concerned has no income in respect of the day,

(b) his income in respect of the day does not exceed the applicable amount, or

(c) his income in respect of the day exceeds that amount but does not exceed the second applicable amount.

(8F) In respect of the same day, a person shall be entitled to a separate community charge benefit in respect of each charge or contribution period concerned (if more than one).

(8G) But regulations may provide that if—

(a) a person would (apart from the regulations) be entitled, in respect of the same day, to separate community charge benefits, and

(b) the circumstances are such as are prescribed.

he shall not be entitled to such one or more of the benefits as may be identified in accordance with prescribed rules."

(4) After subsection (9) there shall be inserted—

"(9A) Subsection (9) above does not prevent different members of the same family becoming entitled to different community charge benefits by virtue of their fulfilling the conditions in respect of different charges or of different contribution periods

(5) In subsection (11)—

(a) before the definition of child there shall be inserted—

"chargeable financial year" has the same as in the 1988 Act;

"charging authority" has the same meaning as in the 1988 Act;"

(b) after the definition of child there shall be inserted—

"contribution period", in relation to England and Wales, has the same meaning as in section 9 of the 1988 Act;

"contribution period", in relation to Scotland, means a continuous period of residence in any premises (which falls in a chargeable financial year) in respect of each day of which a person is liable to pay a collective community charge contribution under section 11(11) of the 1987 Act;"

(c) after the definition of family there shall be inserted—

"levying authority" has the same meaning as in the 1987 Act;"

(d) after the definition of married couple there shall be inserted—

"the 1987 Act" means the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987;

"the 1988 Act" means the Local Government Finance Act 1988."

3.—(1) Section 21 (amount of entitlement) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (5) there shall be inserted—

"(5A) Where a person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a day, and section 20(8E)(a) or (b) above applies, the amount to which he is entitled shall be the amount which is the appropriate maximum community charge benefit in his case.

(5B) Where a person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a day, and section 20(8E)(c) above applies, the amount to which he is entitled shall be found by deducting amount B from amount A, where—

(a) amount A is the appropriate maximum community charge benefit in his case, and

(b) amount B is a prescribed percentage of the difference between the applicable amount and the income of the person concerned in respect of the day.

(5C) Subsection (5D) below applies where—

(a) a person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a day,

(b) on the day the conditions in section 63(1)(a) and (b) of the 1988 Act or the conditions in section 67(1)(a) and (b) of that Act (residual rating) are fulfilled as regards a hereditament.

(c) the person entitled to the benefit is the same person as the ratepayer referred to in section 63(1)(b) or 67(1)(b) of that Act (as the case may be), and

(d) the circumstances are such as are prescribed.

(5D) In such a case—

(a) neither subsection (4) nor subsection (5) above shall apply for the purpose of finding the amount of any prescribed housing benefit which takes the form of a rate rebate and to which he is entitled in respect of any payments by way of the residual rate concerned,

(b) neither subsection (5A) nor subsection (5B) above shall apply for the purpose of finding the amount of the community charge benefit,

(c) the aggregate amount of any such housing benefit and the community charge benefit shall be such as is prescribed,

(d) the amount of any such housing benefit shall be such proportion of that aggregate amount as is prescribed, and

(e) the amount of the community charge benefit shall be such proportion of that aggregate amount as is prescribed."

(3) In subsection (6) after paragraph (b) there shall be inserted—

"(c) the appropriate maximum community charge benefit,"

4.—(1) Section 22 (calculation) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3) for "and housing benefit" there shall be substituted ", housing benefit and any community charge benefit".

(3) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) The second applicable amount shall be such amount or the aggregate of such amounts as may be prescribed."

5. The following shall be inserted after section 22—

"COUPLES.

22A.—(1) As regards any case where a person is a member of a married or unmarried couple throughout a particular day, regulations may make such provision as the Secretary of State sees fit as to—

(a) the entitlement of the person to a community charge benefit in respect of the day, and

(b) the amount to which he is entitled.

(2) Nothing in subsections (3) to (8) below shall prejudice the generality of subsection (1) above.

(3) The regulations may provide that prescribed provisions shall apply instead of prescribed provisions of this Part, or that prescribed provisions of this Part shall not apply or shall apply subject to prescribed amendments or adaptations.

(4) The regulations may provide that, for the purpose of calculating in the case of the person concerned the matters mentioned in subsection (5) below, prescribed amounts relating to the person and his partner are to be aggregated and the aggregate is to be apportioned.

(5) The matters are income, capital, the applicable amount, the second applicable amount, and the appropriate maximum community charge benefit.

(6) Where the regulations contain provision replacing section 21(5C) and 5(D) above as regards a case where the person entitled to a community charge benefit is a member of a married or unmarried couple, the regulations may include —

(a) provision as to any relevant housing benefit to which the person concerned is entitled (as well as provision as to any community charge benefit to which he is entitled);

(b) provision as to any community charge benefit or relevant housing benefit to which his partner is entitled.

(7) The regulations may—

(a) amend section 31B(5) below so as to allow for disregarding the whole or part of any pension payable to the partner of the person concerned in determining the latter's income;

(b) amend section 31B(6) below accordingly.

(8) The regulations may contain different provision as to the following different cases—

(a) cases where the first condition is fulfilled on the day concerned by the person concerned but not by his partner;

(b) cases where the first condition is fulfilled on the day concerned by the person concerned and by his partner.

(9) The regulations may include such supplementary, incidental or consequential provisions as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient.

(10) In this section—

(a) references to a person's partner are to the other member of the couple concerned,

(b) references to relevant housing benefit, in relation to a person, are to prescribed housing benefit which takes the form of a rate rebate and to which he is entitled in respect of any payments by way of the residual rate concerned, and

(c) references to the first condition are to the condition mentioned in section 20(8B) or (8C) above (as the case may be)."

6. The following shall be inserted after section 31—

"*Community charge benefits*

NATURE OF BENEFITS

31A.—(1) In relation to England and Wales, regulations shall provide that where a person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a charging authority's personal community charge the benefit shall take such of the following forms as is prescribed in the case of the person—

(a) a payment or payments by the authority to the person;

(b) a reduction in the amount the person is liable to pay to the authority in respect of the charge as it has effect for the relevant chargeable financial year;

(c) both such payment or payments and such reduction.

(2) In relation to Scotland, regulations shall provide that where a person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a personal community charge determined by a regional, islands or district council the benefit shall take such of the following forms as is prescribed in the case of a person—

(a) a payment or payments to the person by the levying authority to which the charge is payable;

(b) a reduction in the amount the person is liable to pay in respect of the charge as it has effect for the relevant chargeable financial year;

(c) both such payment or payments and such reduction.

(3) Regulations shall provide that where a person is entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a contribution period the benefit shall take such of the following forms as is prescribed in the case of the person—

(a) a payment or payments by the relevant authority to the person;

(b) the reductions mentioned in subsection (4) below;

(c) both such payment or payments and such reductions.

(4) The reductions are—

(a) a reduction in the amount the person is liable to pay to the charge payer in respect of the contribution period, and

(b) a consequential reduction in the amount the charge payer is liable to pay in respect of the charge concerned as it has effect for the relevant chargeable financial year.

(5) For the purposes of subsections (1) and (2) above the relevant chargeable financial year is the chargeable financial year in which the relevant day falls; and the relevant day is the day in respect of which the person concerned is entitled to the benefit.

(6) For the purposes of subsection (3) above the relevant authority is—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, the authority to which an amount is payable in respect of the collective community charge concerned under section 15 of the 1988 Act;

(b) in relation to Scotland, the levying authority to which the collective community charge is payable.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (4) above the charge payer is

(a) in relation to England and Wales, the person who is liable to pay an amount in respect of the collective community charge concerned under section 15 of the 1988 Act;

(b) in relation to Scotland, the person who is liable to pay the collective community charge under section 11(5) of the 1987 Act.

(8) For the purposes of subsection (4) above the relevant chargeable financial year is the chargeable financial year in which the contribution period falls.

(9) Regulations under subsection (1), (2) or (3) above may include such supplementary, incidental or consequential provisions as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient; and such provisions may include provisions amending or adapting provisions of the 1987 Act or the 1988 Act.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR BENEFITS

31B.—(1) Any community charge benefit provided for by virtue of a scheme under section 20(1) above (in this Act referred to as a community charge benefit scheme) is to be administered by the appropriate authority.

(2) For the purposes of this section the appropriate authority in relation to a particular benefit is—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, the charging authority as regards whose personal or collective community charge a person is entitled to the benefit;

(b) in relation to Scotland, the levying authority to which the personal or collective community charge is payable by a person entitled to the benefit.

(3) Charging authorities may agree that one shall carry out responsibilities relating to community charge benefits on another's behalf.

(4) Levying authorities may agree that one shall carry out responsibilities relating to community charge benefits on another's behalf.

(5) A charging authority or levying authority may modify any part of the community charge benefit scheme administered by the authority—

(a) so as to provide for disregarding, in determining a person's income, the whole or part of any war widow's pension payable to that person;

(b) to such extent in other respects as may be prescribed,

and any such modifications may be adopted by resolution of an authority.

(6) Modifications other than such modifications as are mentioned in subsection (5)(a) above shall be so framed as to secure that, in the estimate of the authority adopting them, the total of the benefits which will be allowed by the authority for any year will not exceed the permitted total of benefits for that year.

(7) An authority which has adopted modifications may by resolution revoke or vary them.

(8) If the community charge benefit scheme includes power for an authority to exercise a discretion in allowing community charge benefits, the authority shall not exercise that discretion so that the total of the benefits allowed by it for any year exceeds the permitted total of benefits for that year.

(9) In relation to any authority the permitted total of benefits for any year shall be such amount as is calculated in accordance with rules contained in an order made by the Secretary of State.

ADJUDICATION

31C.—(1) Regulations shall provide that, where a person has claimed a community charge benefit as regards—

(a) a person or collective community charge of a charging authority, or

(b) a personal or collective community charge payable to a levying authority,

the authority shall notify the person of its determination of the claim.

(2) Any such notification shall be given in such form as may be prescribed.

(3) Regulations shall make provision for reviews of determinations relating to community charge benefits.

EXCESS BENEFITS

31D.—(1) Regulations may make provision as to any case where a charging authority or a levying authority has allowed a community charge benefit to a person and the amount allowed exceeds the amount to which he is entitled in respect of the benefit.

(2) As regards any prescribed case where the benefit is in respect of a personal community charge the regulations may provide that

(a) a sum equal to the excess shall be due from the person concerned to the authority (whatever the form the benefit takes);

(b) any liability under any provision included under paragraph (a) above shall be met by such method mentioned in subsection (3) below as is prescribed as regards the case concerned, or by such combination of two or all three of the methods as is prescribed as regards the case concerned.

(3) The methods are—

(a) payments by the person concerned;

(b) addition to any amount payable in respect of the charge concerned;

(c) deduction from any other income-related benefit which he may be allowed by the authority concerned.

(4) As regards any prescribed case where the benefit is in respect of a contribution period the regulations may provide that—

(a) a sum equal to the excess shall be due from the person concerned to the authority (whatever the form the benefit takes);

(b) any liability under any provision included under paragraph (a) above shall be met by such method mentioned in subsection (5) below as is prescribed as regards the case concerned, or by such combination of the methods as is prescribed as regards the case concerned;

(c) there is to be no adjustment as between the person concerned and the charge payer, or as between the charge payer and the authority concerned.

(5) The methods are—

(a) payment by the person concerned;

(b) deduction from any other income-related benefit which he may be allowed by the authority concerned.

(6) In a case where the regulations provide that a sum or part of a sum is to be paid, and the sum or part is not paid on or before such day as may be prescribed, the regulations may provide that the sum or part shall be recoverable in a court of competent jurisdiction.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (4) above the charge payer is—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, the person who is liable to pay an amount in respect of the collective community charge concerned under section 15 of the 1988 Act;

(b) in relation to Scotland, the person who is liable to pay the collective community charge under section 11(5) of the 1987 Act.

SHORTFALL IN BENEFITS.

31E. (1) Regulations may make provision as to any case where a charging authority or a levying authority has allowed a community charge benefit to a person and the amount allowed is less than the amount to which he is entitled in respect of the benefit.

(2) In particular, as regards any prescribed case where the benefit is in respect of a contribution period the regulations may provide that—

(a) a sum equal to the difference shall be due from the authority to the person concerned;

(b) any liability under any provision included under paragraph (a) above shall be met by payment and not by such reductions as are mentioned in section 31A(4) above (whatever the form the benefit actually allowed takes);

(c) there is to be no adjustment as between the person concerned and the charge payer, or as between the charge payer and the authority concerned.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above the charge payer is—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, the person who is liable to pay an amount in respect of the collective community charge concerned under section 15 of the 1988 Act;

(b) in relation to Scotland, the person who is liable to pay the collective community charge under section 11(5) of the 1987 Act

COMMUNITY CHARGE BENEFIT FINANCE.

31F.—(1) For each year the Secretary of State shall pay a subsidy (to be known as community charge benefit subsidy) to each charging authority and to each levying authority.

(2) The amount of community charge benefit subsidy to be paid to a charging authority or a levying authority for a year shall be calculated in such manner as may be specified by an order made by the Secretary of State.

(3) Any such order shall require the calculation to be made by reference to an amount found by—

(a) taking the total amount allowed by the authority for the year by way of community charge benefits, and

(b) adjusting that total by making such additions or subtractions (or both) as are specified in the order.

(4) The Secretary of State may deduct, from the amount which would (apart from this subsection) be payable to a charging or levying authority by way of community charge benefit subsidy for a year, such amount as he considers it unreasonable to pay by way of such subsidy.

(5) The Secretary of State may pay to an authority, as part of the amount of community charge benefit subsidy payable to the authority for a year, an additional sum in respect of the costs of administering community charge benefits; and any such additional sum shall be calculated in a manner specified by an order made by the Secretary of State.

(6) Subsidy under this section shall be payable by the Secretary of State at such time and in such manner as the Treasury may direct, but subject—

(a) to the making of a claim for it in such form and containing such particulars as the Secretary of State may from time to time determine; and

(b) to such conditions as to records, certificates, audit or otherwise as the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury, impose.

(7) The amount of any subsidy payable to an authority shall be calculated to the nearest pound, by disregarding an odd amount of 50 pence or less and by treating an odd amount exceeding 50 pence as a whole pound.

INFORMATION.

31G.—(1) The Secretary of State may supply to charging authorities and levying authorities such information of a prescribed description obtained by reason of the exercise of any of his functions under the

benefit Acts as they may require in connection with any of their functions relating to community charge benefits.

(2) Charging authorities and levying authorities shall supply to the Secretary of State such information of a prescribed description obtained by reason of the exercise of their functions relating to community charge benefits as he may require in connection with any of his functions under the benefit Acts.

(3) It shall also be the duty of each charging authority and of each levying authority to supply the Secretary of State, in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed time—

(a) with such information as he may require concerning its performance of any of its functions relating to community charge benefits; and

(b) with such information as he may require to enable him to prepare estimates of likely future amounts of community charge benefit subsidy.

(4) Each charging authority shall take such steps as appear to it appropriate for the purpose of securing that any person who may be entitled to a community charge benefit as regards a personal or collective community charge of the authority becomes aware that he may be entitled to it.

(5) Each levying authority shall take such steps as appear to it appropriate for the purpose of securing that any person who may be entitled to a community charge benefit in respect of a personal community charge payable to the authority becomes aware that he may be entitled to it.

(6) Each charging authority and each levying authority shall make copies of the community charge benefit scheme, with any modifications adopted by it under section 31B above, available for public inspection at its principal office at all reasonable hours without payment."

7. In section 51 (regulations about claims for and payments of benefit) in subsection (2) after paragraph (e) there shall be inserted—

"(ee) community charge benefits;".

8.—(1) Section 56 (legal proceedings) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (2)(a) and (b) after "housing benefit" there shall be inserted "or community charge benefits".

(3) In subsection (4) for "concerning" there shall be substituted "which relates to housing benefit and concerns".

(4) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) In subsections (2) and (3) above "the appropriate authority" means, in relation to an offence relating to community charge benefits, such authority as is prescribed in relation to the offence."

(5) In subsection (5) for "(4)" there shall be substituted "(4A)".

9. In subsection 61 (consultations on subordinate legislation) after paragraph (b) of subsection (7) there shall be inserted—

"(c) regulations relating to community charge benefits (other than regulations of which the effect is to increase any amount specified in regulations previously made);

(d) an order under section 31B(9) or 31F above,".

10. In section 63 (annual up-rating of benefits) in subsection (1)(i) after "22(1)" there shall be inserted "or (4A)".

11.—(1) Section 83 (orders and regulations) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (2) after "housing benefit" there shall be inserted " or community charge benefits".

(3) In subsection (3) after paragraph (c) there shall be inserted—

"(cc) regulations under Part II of this Act which relate to community charge benefits and are made before 1 April 1990;

(ccc) orders under section 31F(2) or (5) above which are made before 1 April 1990;

(4) In subsection (5) after "30" there shall be inserted ",31F".

12. In section 85 (financial provision) in subsection (1)(a) after sub-paragraph (v) there shall be inserted—

"(vi) community charge benefit subsidy;".'.—[*Mr. Ridley.*]

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Amendment made: No 42, in title, line 6, after 'about', insert 'the capital expenditure and'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9.1 pm

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That the Bill now be read the Third time.

Our debates have been long, but conducted with good nature and courtesy. I thank the hon. Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for that. The details of the Bill have stood up to examination remarkably well, although there are a number of improvements that we have undertaken to make. The principle of the Bill has been challenged repeatedly, but no superior alternative has been found.

The policies of the Opposition parties—local income tax for the remnants of the alliance and their ex-friends, and local income tax plus capital value rates for the Labour party—have been shown to be fatally flawed and unworkable, so much so that both Opposition parties have tried to avoid discussing them, let alone pressing them, throughout our entire debates. That has made their opposition "vacuous"—in the words of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He said:

"Simply to oppose is a sort of vacuous opposition which the people of this country despise".

I sympathise with the hon. Member for Perry Barr. He started the debates "naked", and is now accused by his deputy leader of ending them "vacuous". He has done a good job on the bill and he deserves better than that, especially from his own party.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall not give way. Many hon. Members wish to speak.

The debate came to life last Monday, when my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) advanced a possible solution that, he argued, combined the advantages of a flat rate charge with his desire for the better off to contribute more. At least that was a positive alternative—unlike anything offered by the Labour party. In fact, his scheme combined the disadvantages of a step system with near unworkability without meeting the egalitarian instincts of the Labour party, although it supported him against its better judgment, as expressed by the Leader of the Opposition, in a cyncial attempt to stop the Bill.

The fact is that all the many alternatives we have considered—banded community charges, local income tax, capital value rates, and my hon. Friend's proposal for a three-band community charge—have been shown to have fatal flaws, because it is in principle thoroughly undesirable, and costly and complicated in practice, to have a progressive element in the raising of revenue locally. That is why we suggest that only a quarter of local revenue should be raised locally. That enables us to overcome the practical problems of a progressive local system, by providing for half of local spending through the national tax system, which is progressive.

Some of my hon. Friends would go further, and provide more from the Exchequer, to reduce the size of the

community charge bill. The Bill enables us to take that decision when we come to it, which is not now. I should point out that the great advantage of this system is that, whatever level of Exchequer grant is chosen, the principle of accountability is still preserved, because extra spending above assessed need will always be paid by the community charge payer and be comparable between different authorities. So, for example, if the grant was set so that at last year's spending the community charge for spending at GRE was, say, £100 rather than £178, there would still be the same disparities between London and Rochester, because of the profligacy of the one and the prudence of the other, though the community charge in both cases would be lower. That is not the case with rates, where we have attempted in the past to bring home the costs of local government spending to voters by reducing the grant total and altering the mechanisms by which it is paid. That is an attempt which has not been entirely successful, because of the lack of accountability inherent in the rate system.

That reinforces the point that the progressive contribution to local spending must come from national taxation. I think that we have the split between local and national contributions about right. However, we can judge every year the proportion which we think is right to levy from progressive taxation when we set the level of Exchequer grant.

We have related our proposals to ability to pay. The new improved rebate system gives strong protection to the less well off. It has been shown to leave no one with an unfair burden, while still asking virtually everyone to make at least a small contribution to their council's spending, in the interest of accountability.

The new system of local government finance will usher in a new era—a new attitude in local government. The relationship between councils and their electors will change to one where every council has to concentrate on local rather than national issues, on providing value for money in the services they provide and on serving their customers as their first priority. That will be a great improvement for many authorities controlled by Opposition parties—high time, too. I believe that in time the community charge will come to be seen as a watershed in terms of the strengthening of local democracy.

I make no judgment about what another place may or may not do in relation to the Bill. However, I do believe that I am entitled to observe that the proposal has been endorsed at a general election, and I quote the relevant passage in our 1987 manifesto:

"We will legislate in the first Session of the new Parliament to abolish the unfair domestic rating system and replace rates with a fairer Community Charge.

This will be a fixed rate charge for local services paid by those over the age of 18, except for the mentally ill and elderly people living in homes and hospitals. The less-well-off and students will not have to pay the full charge—but everyone will be aware of the costs as well as the benefits of the local services. This should encourage people to take a greater interest in the policies of their local council and getting value for money."

That is the end of the quotation from our manifesto, which spelt out in great detail what we propose to do.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ridley: I will not give way, because I want to give a lot of hon. Gentlemen an opportunity to speak. I will refrain from giving way.

The policy has since been endorsed in a Second Reading debate in the House lasting two days, a Committee stage of 147 hours, and a Report stage of five days. That included a memorable debate on the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East when I believe the House, with a perfectly respectable majority, took a clear decision to align the system of local government finance with the reality of a society where prosperity is even more widely spread and in which most people can afford a reasonable, flat rate charge and, collectively, they can afford generous help for the less well off. I am sure their Lordships will bear all these points in mind when they come to discuss the Bill.

I thank my Minister of State, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, my officials and all our many supporters for the immense efforts they have all made to get us to this historic point. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.9 pm

Dr. Cunningham: I join the Secretary of State in expressing thanks for the continued courtesy with which these contemptuous, not to say outrageous, matters have been discussed. He could have added that they had been discussed with considerable humour, although not always intentionally, as I gather from some of the things that he has said.

This must be the worst Bill to be introduced by any Government in this country this century. Its provisions are deeply and manifestly unfair. We remain fundamentally and vehemently opposed to it. After four months of discussion and debate, the proposals are worse than at the outset. Fundamental questions remain unanswered, for example, the real level of the tax burden that is to be imposed. We do not know how the rebate scheme will operate or who will benefit. The Government cannot explain how their new business tax will be introduced. We do not know how the new local authority grants system will operate in practice.

However, we do know that the British people now bitterly oppose the whole idea. We know that all British local government associations remain implacably opposed to the idea of the poll tax. We know that the Government's policy on the poll tax has been widely condemned in the British press. A leader in *The Times* on 20 April was highly critical. In a leader on 21 April, *The Daily Telegraph* called upon the Government, "to think again."

In a leading article on 20 April, *The Independent* stated that the Prime Minister should,

"pluck up courage and admit that when she and her colleagues committed themselves to the poll tax, they made a mistake."

The Guardian described the poll tax as "a stricken flagship".—*[Interruption.]* Apparently, all that counts for nothing in a democracy. *The Economist* called upon the Government to "scrap" the poll tax. In an editorial criticising the proposal, *The Observer* stated:

"Thatcher has lost poll tax argument".

Perhaps surprisingly, and most witheringly of all, *The Mail on Sunday* gave the Government,

"Nought out of three for the poll tax targets".

It is rumoured that it gave the Secretary of State nought out of three because it did not think that he could count any higher than that. The same leader then stated:

[Dr. Cunningham]

"Today, as the Government stumbles from ridicule to rebellion over the plan, it has achieved none of its primary objectives . . . The best solution for the Government is to cut its losses and plump, albeit through gritted teeth, for a progressive tax based as much on the ability to pay as on demand for services."

The General Synod of the Church of England has also —*[Interruption.]* Oh, yes, the General Synod has also condemned the proposals,

"believing that a flat-rate community charge is inherently unjust and fails to take sufficient account of ability to pay".

However, apparently all that condemnation counts for nothing—the Government plough on.

The Tory Reform Group did not have a kind word to say for the poll tax. The *Financial Times* called it, "The wilting poll tax", stating:

"The poll tax will never be the right solution to the complex problems of British local government finance. It will never, for this reason, be popular."

It has been interesting to reflect on the wrigglings and writhings of Ministers in the face of all that. The Home Secretary went to his Witney constituency and the local paper the *Oxford Times* stated:

"Hurd says system is the fairest".

However, unfortunately for the right hon. Gentleman, on the same day, the front page of the same newspaper reported the mayor of the Tory Burford council in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency as stating,

"Poll tax will 'double rates bills'".

That is the kind of confusion and disarray that exists in Government circles, the Conservative party and the country.

On Second Reading I pointed out that there were 344 places where matters were left for orders, ministerial decision or for a decision to be announced. By the end of the Committee stage there were 409 such instances and after one week on Report the total has risen incredibly to 649 such instances where no answer is available and it is left to ministerial discretion, orders or some other system yet to be announced or introduced in the House.

At least we have one achievement. On Tuesday 19 April the Secretary of State went on the BBC's "Today" programme and finally conceded that what we were talking about was not a community charge, but a tax. He said:

"is this tax too harsh on the least well off."

He went on to describe it later in the broadcast—I am quoting from the transcript—as follows:

"And, as you see in the national press the Poll Tax has not apparently affected the rating of the Party in the country."

The Secretary of State had better tell that to his right hon. and hon. Friends as they go about their business, working for the party in the local elections in the next few weeks.

The Prime Minister foolishly described the Bill as her flagship. It staggered off the stocks in December with almost all the officer class absent from the bridge. It sailed on in confusion through troubled waters and ran on to the rocks last Monday. I do not know why the Secretary of State thinks that the House of Lords will not ask some searching questions about his Bill. It certainly could not be described in any sense as a glittering, gleaming flagship now; it is more like a dirty Tory tramp steamer staggering along from problem to problem. Every time a serious argument arises, a few more of the crew jump ship and disappear without trace. Every day last week and yet again today we have seen more and more deserters from the cause. It is not so much a flagship; more a Moby Nick.

There is no willing majority for this awful mess. There is no honest majority for it either, as Conservative Members realise. It does not deserve to move an inch further.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call hon. Members from the Back Benches, I remind the House that this is a short debate and I ask for brief speeches.

9.18 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): As we near the end of this great marathon I have a terrible feeling of foreboding. I have opposed the measure from the word go. I said so in my election address; I voted against it on Second Reading; I voted for the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates); and I shall vote against the Bill again tonight.

I was surprised that the Opposition turned out in such force to vote for the amendment last Monday. I thought that some of the troops would be unavoidably absent because, like the Israelites finding manna in the wilderness, they could not believe their good fortune. Oppositions do not win elections; Governments lose them. For 18 months to two years before the next election the demands for this Tory tax will be fluttering on to 10 million doormats. It will not be a paper reminder; there will be visits from council officers.

Anybody who read *The Observer* yesterday will know what I am talking about. What brave people they are, asking about Aunt Nellie, young Jim and all the rest of them. From now on there will be a spate of cartoons, jokes and bitter comment.

All that can save us is the ineptitude of the Opposition —I suppose that we can count on that. The only other alternative would be for the Government to remove some of the burden on local authorities and therefore reduce the incidence of the tax.

My hon. Friends are all experienced canvassers and their efforts during the previous election campaign played a large part in the result. What reaction do they expect on the doorsteps in two years' time? Obviously there will be winners and they will approve, but I suspect that their approval will be muted. There will also be vehement opposition from the losers. But surely what there will not be is any acceptance that the local council is responsible for its position. Councils will blame the Government, as indeed they now blame the Government, for the rates.

No other Government in the western world have tried a poll tax. Some have thought about it, but they have all rejected it. I ask my hon. Friends, would Disraeli have introduced such a tax? Would Salisbury, Bonar-Law, Baldwin, Churchill or Eden have introduced such a tax? The answer must be no. It is against the tradition of our party. It is a new Conservativism. It may be new, but it is certainly not Conservative.

9.21 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor: At the start of the final debate on the Tory tax—the poll tax—the Secretary of State prefaced his remarks by saying that the Bill had stood up remarkably well to examination in this House. A majority

of 25 for the showpiece of the Government is remarkable. I am not entirely sure that that is the type of remarkable event that the Secretary of State wanted his flagship to enjoy.

As the Bill has passed through the House we have, as in so many cases, seen a bad Bill get worse. Almost all the anomalies that appeared in the Bill are still there. It is still discriminating against those becoming mentally ill, it is still discriminating against student nurses. It is still penalising medical students and remand prisoners. It is still hurting those least able to stand up for themselves and least able to defend themselves against the tax. Worse still, the Government have surpassed themselves in their ability to make bad things worse because they have introduced measures to ensure that even the homeless—the dossers—will not escape the tax. They have introduced imprisonment as the penalty for those who cannot pay. They have instigated yet more expenditure controls on local authorities unable, even now, to provide a decent service for those within their authority.

As to the only possible improvement that the Government tried to give us—the changes in the withdrawal on rebates—the truth will out. The Government wanted to take back what they had given by the back door while presenting that change to their Back Benchers at the front door and asking for their support.

The Secretary of State says that there is no alternative that can work. His measure, however, is not supported by any other country. Even those countries that still have a poll tax are withdrawing it, whereas the local income tax is present in country after country—it is made to work in those countries.

The Minister for Local Government should consider how he will explain to student nurses in Shepway why they would save 34 per cent. under our local income tax scheme in comparison with the Secretary of State's proposals. In the constituency of the Minister for Local Government, student nurses would save 36 per cent. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) kept jumping up and down and telling us about student nurses. He should bear in mind that, under our scheme, student nurses would save 27 per cent. in his constituency.

There are alternatives to the poll tax—we have heard of such alternatives from Conservative Back Benchers. Those alternatives have been put forward for various measures. With vote after rebellious vote the flagship has sunk deeper into the water.

The truth is that the Secretary of State cannot defend his proposals. He has to twist arms, using the Whips Office, and offices in the constituencies of Conservative Members, who are too honourable to permit the passing of the Bill without protest. I hope that at the end of the debate those hon. Members will show their honour once again by fighting this proposed Tory tax. They would be doing a service, because, if nothing else, this will be a one-Government tax. It will not just be thrown away as soon as another party comes into Government. It will be thrown away and recognised as a failure as soon as the Prime Minister changes, whatever party he or she may represent.

That shows the lack of support for the Bill, and Conservative Members know it. There have been no cheers for the Secretary of State, no smiles, and no pleasure in its passing. There is only fear on the Conservative Benches, because they know the havoc that it will wreak in the local elections and the general election to come.

9.25 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I should tell the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that I am joining ship at this point. As I have not yet spoken on the Bill, perhaps I may be allowed to say a few words before we say au revoir to the Bill. It certainly will not be adieu.

I have long been a critic of the domestic rating system, and I have spoken on the subject in the House many times. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has produced a Bill to abolish the domestic rating system, and we should not pass the Bill without noting that. In saying goodbye to the domestic rates, let us remember that they are unfair, overcomplex, out-of-date and deeply resented by many of the people who pay them. Let us also remember that, if we continued the domestic rating system, there would have to be a revaluation——

Mr. Maxton: We have had one.

Sir David Price: I know. The hon. Gentleman makes a cogent comment. What happened in Scotland shows exactly what would happen if we had it in England and Wales—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members had been in government, they would have taken the kicks for that revaluation. Any Government in power would take the kicks after such a revaluation.

It does not follow that a substitute local tax would be automatically superior to the domestic rates. It appears from our debates that not all my colleagues are entirely over the moon with the new community charge. However, like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I have not heard a superior solution offered during our debates.

We should also remember that it is no good advancing theoretical options that are administratively impossible to run. Nor is it any good to put forward proposals on taxes that are already pre-empted by national taxes. I think especially of a local sales tax. What my right hon. Friend has proposed in the Bill is a reasonable alternative to the domestic rate, provided that it is retained at the levels currently suggested for the shire counties. The knowledge that the charge is expected to produce only a quarter of local government revenue is a safeguard against its getting out of hand, but it always remains open to the Government to increase the taxpayers' contribution. That should be a great comfort to those who are doubtful about the future level of charges.

Furthermore—it is sufficient for my purposes to note the possibility, and it was confirmed by my right hon. Friend in his speech on Third Reading—the Bill provides a secure escape route for those who doubt whether the charge will be held at the present proposed level. It is also important to note that, should new duties of national importance be placed on local authorities by the Government or by Parliament, specific grants should be given to cover them. I have in mind in particular the current proposal by Sir Roy Griffiths that care in the community should move to local authorities.

With those two reservations, I shall be very content to vote for Third Reading.

9.30 pm

Mr. Terry Davis: This Bill is not about accountability but about redistribution—the redistribution of taxation and therefore of income and wealth. The Bill's real objective is to shift the cost of local government from the

[Mr. Terry Davis]

people with the highest incomes, living in the biggest and most expensive houses, to people with average and below average incomes, living in flats, bungalows, terraced houses and, many families living in typical three-bedroomed semi-detached houses—owner-occupiers and council tenants alike. The people of this country reject this Tory tax, and that is one of the reasons why they will reject this Tory Government.

9.31 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I voted against the Bill on Second Reading and, given that there was little change in Committee, it will come as little surprise to my right hon. and hon. Friends if my vote remains the same on Third Reading.

I bitterly regret the fact that, as a result of property revaluation in Scotland, my party has been bounced into arguably the worst solution of all in local government finance. I have asked my hon. Friends to raise their eyes to other countries. If one does that, one sees three options: a tax on property, a tax on individuals, based on income, or a level charge across the board. I have no doubt that the last is the worst option. My biggest regret as someone who for a number of years has followed the whole question of local authority funding and how to achieve a better system is that tonight we are probably postponing a long-term solution. My real fear is that in a few years' time a Government—frankly, it could be under either of the major political parties—will come back to the House because the proposals will have been found to be unworkable in many ways, and exorbitantly expensive.

It is with a heavy heart that I announce that I shall not be supporting the Bill tonight.

9.32 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Patently, the Bill does not have the wholehearted consent of the House of Commons. It does not have majority support in Wales, any more than its predecessor had majority support in Scotland, and many Conservative Members must be praying that the House of Lords will let the House of Commons off the hook.

The Bill is inherently unfair, in charging the millionaire and those on relatively low incomes the same for local government services. What is proposed is an inefficient way of collecting money; the Bill will double the cost of collecting charges for the local exchequer.

The imposition that the Bill will place on small businesses will not only be a burden on those businesses; it will make a travesty of regional policy and make impossible any meaningful approach to regeneration in areas away from the south-east of England.

The Government's failure to introduce proposals to safeguard the position of community councils will be felt in Wales, and parish councils will suffer in England. The Government should be ashamed of their failure to ensure a coherent policy for care in the community, with the result that people with mental handicaps will find themselves better off in institutional care than at home in the community.

It became clear in an earlier debate that the real danger is that the Government will be looking for ways of offloading charges from local government. In the end, the most likely candidate for transfer from the county councils to the central Exchequer will be education, or at least the cost of teachers—another step towards the centralisation of services.

I appeal to Conservative Members who have the courage of their convictions to vote against this iniquitous tax.

9.33 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): No one will seriously mourn the passing of the present domestic rating system. It is riddled with anomalies and unfairness. It gives every incentive for local councils to be profligate and to write cheques on other people's bank accounts. It gives no real incentive for local councils to be prudent, as they have little accountability to those whose money they spend, often with gay abandon.

The arguments against the present rating system are legion. Nothing kills off more quickly than the prospect of revaluation any lingering idea of retaining the existing rating system rather than opting for something new. We could not carry on with the existing system without a revaluation, since the last revaluation was in 1973. A revaluation now after 14 years would inevitably lead to massive disruption for ratepayers.

The community charge has many advantages. It is straightforward, nearly every adult over the age of 18 will be liable to pay an equal share, and there is protection for the weaker and poorer members of the community. It will ensure that those who spend the money will be accountable to those who provide much of the money that is spent. It will ensure that business, commerce and industry will no longer become prey to the unreasonable demands of unreasonable councils and will be a fairer system because 69 per cent. of pensioners and 83 per cent. of one-parent families will be better off.

Estimates using sample information aggregated from family expenditure surveys show that most families will be better off paying the proposed community charge than they are with rates. On average, the community charge will be lower than the rates bill, at all income levels up to £150 a week. When it is fully implemented, 53 per cent. of households or 9·8 million families in England will gain from the community charge. Critics try to sink the community charge and to dream up as many obstacles as possible. It is a racing certainty that they cannot come up with an alternative that provides fairness and accountability by councillors to those who provide the money that they spend.

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Baldry: The Opposition will not be able to argue with any conviction whatever that the community charge will weaken democracy. They may rant about it, but throughout the passage of the Bill they have not come up with a viable alternative. They have been empty of ideas. The community charge will at last put the community in charge. It is a worthwhile and sensible reform and should command the support of the whole House.

9.37 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I was a member of the Committee and I can tell the House that we spent 147 hours debating the Bill. The first debate was about ability

to pay and the last debate will be about the same subject. I well remember the definition of the poll tax given by the Tory Reform Group. They said that it is fair only in the sense that the black death was fair. It is indiscriminate and strikes at rich and poor, young and old, unemployed and employed alike. That should be the theme of the last debate on the Bill.

Underlying the Bill is a let-them-eat-cake approach to social problems. It assumes a world of choice for everyone, but we know that choice is a function of economic viability and, increasingly, the Government have denied that to many millions of people. The tax does nothing for individuals or for businesses. I asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in Committee about registration for individuals using the Simon Community, an organisation that looks after the destitute in London, and I well remember what he said. He said that he would be surprised if the community did not know where the people came from and where they went. That is the Government's view of reality, and that is why they are so out of touch.

I shall leave the last word to a constituent who sent me a definition of poll tax. It comes from the 1961 "Odhams Encyclopaedia" which says that it is

"a tax per head of population—not graduated, imposed in primitive communities where it appears impossible to ascertain individual capacity to bear the burden."

I say that it is imposed by primitive political individuals on the Government Front Bench who have no sense of social responsibility. A leader in *The Times* said that it is a social Bill with wider social implications, *The Economist*, which is a friend of the Government, said we should scrap the tax, and *The Times* said it should be scuppered in another place. But Conservative Members who have spoken against the Bill should not confine their courage to their voices. They should transfer it to their feet by joining us and voting against the Bill tonight.

9.40 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I shall not detain the House for too long. After seven days on the Floor of the House and more than 140 hours in Committee debating numerous technical amendments and a number of welcome concessions, the community charge remains essentially the same as it leaves the House as it was when it entered this place.

The reason for that is not unexpected. We fought the last election on a manifesto that clearly stated that the community charge would be a fixed rate charge. On Second Reading, a substantial majority voted for the Bill. In Committee, although there were many Divisions, our majorities were large. Last Monday, on an amendment to change the basic idea behind the community charge, the Government's majority dropped, but it should never be forgotten that there was still a majority of 25 votes. Indeed, 320 of my hon. Friends supported the Government.

Finally, as the Bill goes to the other place, its opponents are clamouring for help. The alliance parties are inspiring the will of the House of Lords to do the work that could not be done in the House of Commons because this House did not approve changing the Bill. Lloyd George certainly must be smiling in his grave at the ironic position of the Opposition. The Labour party is clamouring for help from the House of Lords. The Labour party now must be pleased that the proposed reform of that body by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) never saw the light of day.

As the measure reaches the other place, the Lords should think very carefully before they try to do anything substantially to change the Bill. The legislation was in our manifesto on which we won the election. Many Conservative Members voted consistently for the Bill. I advise the Lords not to jump in too quickly to thwart the will of the House.

9.43 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): The defects of the poll tax are innumerable. It is cumbersome to administer, it is more difficult to collect and it creates the bureaucratic burden of maintaining the poll tax legislation. The fact that today we have heard that the poll tax will be subject to a capping mechanism shows that the Government do not believe their own promise that it will make local government more accountable.

The poll tax will increase the temptation to avoid registering to vote. Above all, the tax is not fair. It is hitting the poorest people in our society the hardest. Only last week I was told by a wealthy single man with two homes that he stood to gain £2,500 as a result of the measure. The people in Greenwich will lose almost universally. A survey of 1,500 people shows that 93 per cent. of the people in Greenwich will lose and 62 per cent. of them will lose by more than £500 a year. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the hon. Lady a fair hearing.

Mrs. Barnes: Not only are the poor hit hard by the measure, but those on modest average incomes will find it extremely hard to pay an extra £500, £600 or £700 a year.

It has been suggested that no alternative has been put forward. Time and again my party has said that local income tax and proportional representation would at a stroke make local authorities properly democratically accountable.

9.45 pm

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): I voted against the Bill on Second Reading because I thought it a bad Bill and I should now like to see it dumped in the legislative dustbin from which its major provision came. The community charge is regressive, inefficient and unfair. The arguments in its favour were always thin and they have grown shabby and worn with repetition. Claims about increased accountability are wildly exaggerated and the statistics deployed in aid are, at best, questionable.

The poll tax is generally unpopular. The Committee and Report stages demonstrated that much of the Bill has been ill-prepared. The 11th hour concession about rebates was an inadequate response to the widespread desire, and our earlier commitment, that the new tax should take account of the ability of the individual or the household to pay. The circumstances surrounding this concession leave a nasty taste in one's mouth.

I regard the manifesto argument and justification as largely bogus. The issue was not generally discussed and debated at the general election. Indeed, Ministers were astonishingly reticent, or perhaps politically wise, in saying little about it. Some candidates, including myself, were careful to distance themselves from the proposal.

[Sir Barney Hayhoe]

I cannot recall any other major measure introduced by a Conservative Government since Winston Churchill returned to power in 1951 which is as potentially damaging to the long-term interests of the Conservative party as this Bill. As I look at its intrinsic unfairness and its bureaucratic implications, I am sorry and ashamed that such a Bill should be introduced by Conservative Ministers. However, it is not really a Conservative measure, but rather a product of what is labelled by the media as Thatcherism.

Of course the Bill contains some useful provisions, but, in my judgment, these are insufficient to outweigh the fundamental flaws of this unfair community charge proposal. I shall vote against Third Reading.

Mr. Wilson: The right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) and the hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) have spoken perceptively about the political realities of what is going through. Even when the Bill staggers out of this House and into the other place, the debate will not end. It is only just beginning. It will continue for another two years in the country. Day by day, people learn more about the poll tax, and there is a straightforward progression in all of this. The more that they know about it, the more they are opposed to it.

The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) has been the only Tory Back-Bench Member to speak in favour of the Bill. I can use the script that he used, because I have here a brief from the Conservative reseach department. I recognised the phrases in it. It is a gullible's travels of the poll tax which gives the more gullible Conservative Members something to cling to. It says that the rates are anachronistic because they are a property tax. We do not believe that there is anything anachronistic about a property tax, and it is better to have an old but imperfect tax than an infinitely worse new tax. Tory Members are told to talk about lack of accountability and to tell people that nearly half of all local voters do not pay rates. That is a myth which appeals only to the simple-minded who believe that the only person to pay the rates is the one whose name happens to be on the rates demand.

Tories are told to go forth and tell the public that the rates are unfair and that a poor widow—presumably the same one who has just been hit by housing benefit cuts—pays the same as four adults. However, they are not to go forth and say that in future, under the poll tax, a millionaire will pay a quarter of what four poor adults will pay.

Conservatives are supposed to go forth and tell people that domestic rates are highly complex. However, they will not go forth and tell people that domestic rates are a model of clarity, compared with the Kafkaesque poll tax. Those are the facts. Eighty per cent. of the people in Scotland have come to despise the poll tax and its architects. The same process will take place in England and Wales.

The poll tax is wicked. It was conceived by people with no social concern, backed by people who do not have the independence of mind to think for themselves. The poll tax will be defeated, if not in this House, in the country. The people who have imposed the poll tax will be defeated with it.

9.50 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): To the great amusement of the House, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made much of the Tory flagship leaving port. At least the Tory flagship has set sail. Where is the Labour flagship? It is still tied firmly to the quay. At the 59th minute of the 11th hour, we still do not know Labour party policy. The House and the nation have a right to know what the Labour party intends to foist on the nation if we are ever so unlucky as to elect a Labour Government.

The Labour party is afeared. It is afeared that it can no longer foist large business rates on an unsuspecting business community. It is afeared that it can no longer foist heavy rate rises on the community knowing that in many areas only one in four voters actually pays rates.

The Labour party is afeared. This is an historic moment. The community charge will be based on people's ability to pay because three quarters of the cost will be accounted for by business and taxation. That is why Conservative Members will vote for the Third Reading, not just in their ones and twos, but in their tens and hundreds.

9.51 pm

Mr. Rooker: When the keel was laid for this flagship, the Prime Minister was not here. As it sets sail out of the harbour off the House of Commons, she is not here. There is no member of the Cabinet on the Government Front Bench except the Secretary of State for the Environment. Ministers are distancing themselves as far from this Bill as possible.

This Bill is the Tory flagship. The flagship will sink as a result of design defects as the flagship of the Royal Swedish navy sank as it left the harbour in 1628 because of design defects. The Bill is flawed. It is unfair and undemocratic. Indeed, it is anti-democratic in its drafting. It is also, of course, anti-local government from the first clause to the last.

Conservative Members have refused to defend any kind of independent local government system in this country. Five million adults in England will lose under the poll tax, including 1 million single pensioners. Those are the consequences awaiting this flagship.

Someone referred to concessions. We still do not know whether monks and nuns will be on rebates or exempt from the tax. The Government have lost the argument. Day in, clause in, and day out, clause out, they have lost the argument.

Every day over the past week, different Conservative Members voted against the Bill. The Bill would not pass on a free or secret vote. I challenge any Minister who contradicts that to raise his hand.

Our opposition has been positive and honourable. We have promoted amendments to the Bill to change the nature of the tax to make it fairer. We are promoting amendments to the Bill to change the nature of the tax, to make it fairer. We have promoted amendments to relate the tax to income, and to keep part of local government taxation related to property. At every juncture, the Government have rubbished each alternative. They have rubbished also the alternative put forward by their own Back Benchers. They have twisted the figures for exemption on every occasion that they have been put forward by the Opposition.

The words of a Conservative Member should be borne in mind; nobody will be able to accuse the Opposition——

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Of having a policy?

Mr. Rooker: No one will be able to accuse any Opposition party of seeking to make crude party political capital out of this Bill. We do not want this Bill. As I said on Second Reading, we do not want the Bill, even though it will damage the Government to the point that they will lose the next election. We care about the detail but we do not want the Bill. That is why we have suggested alternatives. We have no secret desire to see the Bill on the statute book to the advantage of our party. Conservative Members may jest and laugh, but for them there is no long-stop down that Corridor. Whatever they may feel in their hearts, they will not deliver. The Bill will get its Third Reading, whatever the majority. However, I tell the Government that this Bill will bury them.

Mr. Howard: I intended responding to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) by remarking on the absence from the Opposition Front Bench of members of the shadow Cabinet. However, I would have been doing the hon. Gentleman an injustice because a couple of minutes ago there crept into the recesses of the Chamber, and can still be seen hidden, none other than the right hon. Gentleman the deputy leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It was he who described the opposition of his party to this Bill as vacuous—not honourable and positive as was suggested by the hon. Member for Perry Barr, but vacuous, because the Opposition failed to put forward a policy of their own.

The Bill has occupied the attention of the House for a total of 188 hours. During the whole of our debate there has been one issue upon which almost all of us have been in complete agreement: we cannot continue with the existing system of paying for local government—the status quo is not an option. Change is urgently required, and only the Government had the courage to put to the people of this country specific proposals for change.

We had two objectives in seeking to reform the way in which we pay for local government. The need for accountability was recognised as long ago as 1966, when the Labour Government White Paper complained that many people who could afford to pay for local government made no contribution. The fact is that one will never achieve accountability in local government until everyone makes a direct contribution towards the cost of local authority services. The community charge, and only the community charge, fulfils that objective. We believe that a standard level of service should cost the same in every local authority area in the country. That is what the community charge, and only the community charge, will achieve. We believe that any variations in local spending should be paid for by the local communities that benefit from that spending. That is what the community charge, and only the community charge, will achieve.

For years there has been a clamour across the party divide for an end to the domestic rating system. There is only one difference between ourselves and the Opposition parties. It is not that only the Government see the need for reform; it is that only the Government have the courage and determination to carry out that reform. It is reform that will be good for local communities, good for local government, and good for the people of this country. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 259.

Division No. 275] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ames, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*

Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'hauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John

Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure)

10.15 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 434), dated 9th March 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th March, be annulled.

My reason for moving the motion is that on 9 March the Secretary of State announced that he intended to introduce further measures to restrict local authority capital borrowing expenditure. He said:

"a minority of local authorities are employing artificial devices to incur capital expenditure and to undertake borrowing over and above the levels permitted to them under the existing capital control system."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vo. 129, column 326.]

That was the Secretary of State's reason for bringing in the new measures. Again, the right hon. Gentleman is taking panic measures against local authorities, because councillors have found ways of providing for their constituents services that in many instances are important and necessary to maintain and to provide a worthy and Christian way of life in their communities. Tonight, the Secretary of State informed the House of further changes. His statement that he did not know what was happening further demonstrates the panic that the Government are in.

Furthermore, the new regulations come only three months after the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Consolidation and Amendment) Regulations 1987—statutory instrument No. 2186 of 1987. The financing devices that were under attack in the new regulations did not suddenly come to the Government's attention. The regulations suddenly became necessary through a lack of foresight and the crisis of management facing the Government. Hon. Members will recall that, only a few months ago, the Secretary of State said that he was the only person who understood local government finance. Tonight, he admitted that he does not have a clue. He does not know what is going on.

It has been accepted that several local authorities checked with the Department of the Environment before entering into any barter deals and schemes with private organisations. The Secretary of State told the House tonight that he did not know what was happening. That is a measure of how much the Secretary of State realises what is taking place in his Department.

Obviously, the advice that was given to local authorities was affirmative, and they proceeded in accordance with that advice. The Secretary of State then said that he knew nothing about what was happening. In fact, more than 250 local authorities could be affected by the move that was presented by the Secretary of State. As a result of the new regulations, several local authorities will incur prescribed expenditure set out in agreements that have already been entered into.

The Government have promised to consider issuing more additional capital allocations when the Secretary of State is satisfied that agreements were not entered into for the purpose of evading capital expenditure borrowing controls. We are curious to learn from the Secretary of State how he intends to decide on the imperfections of local authorities, and what information he has about the issuing of additional borrowing powers and to which authorities.

The Secretary of State said that there were no facts given on the issue. However, local authorities will be asking whether their particular schemes will be included in the exemptions that were announced by the Secretary of State. The Department of the Environment accepted that almost one third of local authorities could be affected by these regulations, where barter deals have been entered into. As I said, many authorities checked with the Department of the Environment on the schemes that they were considering before entering into any deals with the private sector. The action of the Secretary of State affects large and small authorities alike.

Cheltenham borough council intended to raise funds to provide a flood relief and draining scheme in their area. That was to be done by lease and leaseback deals, using a swimming pool complex to raise the funds. That is quite legitimate, but, because of the Secretary of State's action, that council will have to look for alternatives. It was not possible for Cheltenham borough council to find that amount of money from their allocations or capital receipts.

Gloucester city council had to stop a £5 million housing development on a former allotment site. That, again, was a necessary scheme. It will now have to find other means of raising funds for the scheme because of the Government cuts, both in the housing improvement programme and the housing investment programme, and because of the regulations that the Secretary of State announced that he would introduce.

Those schemes, and many others, were genuine capital schemes. The capital being raised was to fund existing capital programmes and not, as the Secretary of State implies, to bridge deficits in the revenue account.

Furthermore, local authorities are only copying the Government's attitude in using the assets available to them to finance other policies. The Secretary of State said that councils should transfer their asset base to the private sector. That is exactly what local authorities have been doing. It is devastating for people who serve on local councils, and wish to provide services for their communities, to discover that the Government are reneging on their advice to local government that it should be looking for other forms of financing capital schemes and that the private sector should be taken into consideration and into partnership.

I wish to question the Under-Secretary of State about the concessions that the Secretary of State said are to be made to local authorities. Wakefield district council, in the area I represent, used to boast of being the centre of the mining industry. However, over the past nine years we have watched the demise of the mining industry in west Yorkshire and, because of that demise, the district council wanted to retain some of the history of mining in the Wakefield area. With the co-operation of British Coal and other bodies, it was agreed to turn one of the smaller pits, which had closed, into a mining museum.

Caphouse colliery is a small colliery in West Yorkshire. It is a shallow pit, which is to be developed as a mining museum. The trust that was set up to develop the Caphouse colliery scheme applied to the European Community for a grant and was promised that a grant would be made. Suffice it to say that the Department of the Environment has told Wakefield district council that if the

application for the grant is approved and the grant is obtained, the council will have to give up an equivalent amount of loan sanction to cover it.

I ask the Under-Secretary whether the anomalous rules that the Government are introducing mean that that grant will count against that council's prescribed expenditure allocation. In other words, will Wakefield district council come under the provisions of the proposals that the Secretary of State has outlined, or will the grant that would be forthcoming from the EEC count against the capital borrowing levels of Wakefield district council? That issue can be mirrored in many other local authorities which are in the same situation of trying to develop something in their area under the barter system or the lease and leaseback arrangements.

I must also draw attention to the grotesque report that was issued by the Government on 9 March to try to substantiate their action in changing the law on capital spending. The chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, Councillor Jack Layden, made it clear in his letter to the Secretary of State on 22 March that the statement that was issued by the Secretary of State was dramatically misleading.

Southwark's reply to the Secretary of State's statement was that the statement

"could not be much further from the truth."

Richmond's reply was

"Mr. Ridley's statement is entirely inaccurate as far as the reference to this council is concerned."

Coventry replied:

"The statement contains a serious inaccuracy."

Manchester replied:

"The Department should have been able to get the facts right"

and stated that everything was discussed in public.

Brighton replied:

"The section in the document is inaccurate and we have written to the Secretary of State to point this out."

In other words, the Secretary of State's statement was totally misleading, and inaccurate in many ways and should have been withdrawn at the very beginning. It is true that my report does not suit Conservative Members, but those are the facts. Local authorities are still waiting for replies to the points that they have made about the Secretary of State's statement.

I draw attention to the report of the Audit Commission entitled "Local Authority Property—A Management Overview." Paragraph 33 states:

"Resources necessarily tied up in property could be released to generate capital receipts. At a time of increasing pressure on resources it is vital that authorities seek to augment their capital allocations whenever possible. Despite restrictions on the use of capital receipts, they are still worth having."

Paragraph 26 states:

"Capital receipts can also be used for the redemption of debt thus also bringing revenue benefits. A balance therefore needs to be struck between investing in the life of the asset and other conflicting demands."

At paragraph 44, the Audit Commission states:

"Central government ought to place more emphasis on 'carrots' rather than 'sticks'. Incentives to develop under-used land could be improved by changes to the system of capital controls."

The Audit Commission is advising the Government that there is more to be gained from using incentives and offering support and carrots than from trying to beat local authorities with sticks, which is what the Secretary of State has been attempting to do for some considerable time.

The digest issued by the Association of District Councils refers to 150 district council projects which are in jeopardy because of the Secretary of State's proposed amendments to the new regulations. Of those, at least 31 are leisure schemes, more than 30 are housing schemes and a great many are to provide facilities for the elderly and the disabled.

The district councils are embarking on schemes to provide necessary facilities for their communities. Many involve development for industry, many provide office accommodation to release high-rented accommodation, some provide new market facilities in the communities and there are a host of other proposals. The majority of district councils are Tory-controlled or have no overall majority, so it is not Labour-controlled authorities that are pressing the Government for amendments to their regulations.

In view of what the Secretary of State said tonight, the most appropriate action is to withdraw the regulations. I ask the Minister to withdraw them. If he will not, I ask the House to reject them.

10.32 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I cannot say that I give an enthusiastic welcome to these regulations, for many of the reasons which the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) described and particularly because of their impact, which is unfair and harsh, on my district council. It is a modest, prudent, well-run, economically conducted affair, yet it finds these regulations wholly unacceptable.

I shall highlight one or two points in the letter I received today from the chief executive. He states:

"In view of the progressive decline in the annual housing and other services block capital allocations over recent years the Council has had to seek various ways and means to enable its high priority schemes to proceed. Some major projects have been by means of 'advanced payments schemes' but of course such devices were blocked by the earlier Government controls introduced about a year ago."

Accordingly, more recently and within the law, my district council

"decided to engage in a 'barter scheme' by the sale of existing Council mortgages to achieve a barter arrangement in conjunction with CIPFA Services Limited. This arrangement was due to have financed two small housing schemes for elderly persons' bungalows"—

the sort of project that one would imagine all sides of the House would welcome—

"at a total cost of £400,000, in villages in which the Council had made no previous housing provision. The barter scheme was also intended to allow the Council to provide a sports pavilion, at a cost of £160,000, for a 50 acre multi-pitch sports ground which the Council has recently acquired after many years of negotiation with a multiplicity of owners."

Such worthy projects will be blocked as a results of the regulations that we are discussing.

"The latest capital expenditure controls also appear likely to block a scheme for bungalow provision for the elderly in another village where the Council intended to sell part of the housing site to a private developer in consideration of the developer building a small group of elderly persons' bungalows for the Council."

That scheme has been in the pipeline for many years and ha l unanimous support. As a result of inadequate housing investment allocation and limitation on the use of capital receipts, it has proceeded no further.

My council and I also believe that two further worthwhile projects will be prejudiced if the regulations are passed tonight. The first is a scheme relating to the provision of another group of bungalows for the elderly

[Sir John Farr]

under council control. In addition to that, the council has been negotiating to exchange land to provide sites for car parking and recreation.

Initially, it was difficult to believe that such modest requirements in the conduct of model local government should be blocked by any Government at Whitehall. Apparently the new proposals will prevent such exchanges. My council's chief executive has been in touch with the Department of the Environment and it has suggested that the council will be caught and prevented from proceeding with the schemes.

I want the Minister to explain why such model schemes designed to help elderly people and improve the running of small towns by the provision of additional car parking are to be blocked by the regulations.

My council would prefer not to resort to "unorthodox" means of financing capital schemes. The chief executive has, however, pointed out:

"with the Housing Capital Allocation for 1988-89 at £640,000 and the Other Services Block Allocation at £171,000 it will be evident that capital investment is gradually nearing a standstill, even though the prescribed proportion of capital receipts now produces annually a spending potential almost double the capital allocations."

In recent years, Harborough district council has been a model of well-conducted local government. In deference to Government pressure and as a result of declining means of finance since the introduction of the Local Government Planning and Land (No. 2) Act 1980, it has rephased or eliminated many other capital projects.

It will be obvious to the House that the particular schemes that I have mentioned were regarded as high priority by the council. I find it difficult to believe that it is the intention of the regulations to hamper good local government in such a way. I hope that when my hon. Friend replies he will give me answers that are sufficient to convince me to follow him into the Division Lobby.

10.39 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): This important debate is on a set of regulations that is another example of the Government's determination to clamp down on local government's ability to deal with its present problems. To some extent, local authorities have had to use such means to finance projects in their areas because of the Government's controls on capital expenditure. By introducing legislation on the powers of local authorities and their means of raising finance, the Government have repeatedly attacked and restricted their ability to function. This is yet another example.

When the Secretary of State spoke earlier about the poll tax Bill, he made it clear that when he made his statement in March he did not realise the exact position. As it is becoming increasingly clear that this means of financing local government expenditure is being used by local authorities of all political persuasions, the Government should be prepared to think again about the regulations. The Association of District Councils has said that the regulations will jeopardise 150 district council projects. That must worry the Government.

As local authorities can use only a limited amount of their capital receipts, the Government must realise the problems that they are creating. The regulations would affect the ability of local authorities to tackle some of the Government's so-called priorities on housing problems and urban decay. Since the general election, they have said much about tackling the problems of the inner cities, yet the regulations would make the task even more difficult.

The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) mentioned the problems that would be created in his constituency, and in the earlier debate the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) listed the range of problems that would be created in his local borough if the Government do not change their mind. I hope that the Minister will respond to one or two points that I shall make about Burnley.

A few years ago, Burnley sold more than 100 unmodernised semi-detached council houses to Wimpey. The intention was to renovate the houses and sell them in the private sector, but most of them had been empty for some time. Instead of taking cash for those houses, because the council could have spent only 20 per cent. of it, it agreed that Wimpey should modernise 12 houses that remained in council ownership. It meant that 12 families could have their houses modernised immediately, instead of the smaller number whose houses could have been modernised by the limited amount of capital receipts that the council could have spent.

The chief executive officer of Burnley borough council told me that it is involved in a neighbourhood revitalisation scheme in conjunction with the Government. Indeed, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) visited the area recently to examine the problems of the Hargher Clough and Stoops estates. Those schemes could also be affected if the Government are not prepared to consider sensibly how they will be financed.

The central area of Burnley also needs modernisation, and we must deal with the car parking problems in the town centre. Those examples are similar to those cited by Conservative Members. It seems sensible that local authorities should be able to deal with the problems; let us have regeneration rather than allowing dereliction and decay.

The Government repeatedly say that local government and the private sector should work together. Surely such schemes are a good example of local authorities and the private sector working together to deal with problems in their areas. The chief executive pointed out to me a scheme in the neighbouring authority of Pendle. The authority is to form a company and take a lease or enter a leaseback arrangement to enable it to build a swimming bath. That scheme, too, could be jeopardised if we continue to move in this direction. The regulations have nothing to commend them; they do nothing to enable local authorities to deal with their problems. They will serve only to ensure that the problems get worse rather than tackling them now.

I hope that the Minister will think again. As I said, the Secretary of State made it clear that much more information had come to his attention since he made his statement in March. In the earlier debate, the Minister said that he would grant two concessions to the schemes in the pipeline, but that does not mean that similar schemes will be able to go ahead in future. The Minister may have faced up to reality with regard to schemes that have already been negotiated or are being negotiated now and may have solved the problems they pose, but if he believes that they are valid and justified now, he ought to permit similar

schemes in future. If he does not do that, he must once again accept responsibility for creating problems for local government.

10.47 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): One of the principal problems that the Government faced when they came to power was the indebtedness, not just of national Government but, significantly, of local authorities, particularly as local authorities account for 25 per cent. of all public expenditure. It is significant that, when the controls on the use of capital receipts were first introduced, many local authorities asked, "Why should we not be able to spend the money that we receive from the sale of assets? It is our money and we have it there in the bank." But of course, they did not have the money in the bank. Had they paid the money into the bank, they would only have reduced their indebtedness. That is true of local authorities up and down the land. They are all heavily borrowed and there is a need to reduce the amounts that they borrow. That is why the Government rightly introduced controls on the use of capital receipts.

The measures that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State introduced on 9 March proved to be absolutely right. It was necessary to introduce them to ascertain the scale of avoidance of the capital receipts rules through the use of barter. My right hon. Friend has done the nation a great service by introducing the regulations.

Nevertheless, my right hon. Friend was absolutely right to respond, as he did earlier this evening, to the particular problems that have been revealed in many places, arising from the regulations. It was right, for example, to make exemptions to allow local authorities to deal with existing unavoidable contractual arrangements. It was right, too, to examine individual proposals for expenditure—particularly where those were necessary to achieve comprehensive redevelopment or to assist in land assembly or with similar problems.

I thank the Secretary of State for his action, which has been very helpful to my own constituency of Bournemouth, West. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and I have made a number of representations to the Secretary of State about particular projects in Bournemouth. One was the major redevelopment of an area in Boscombe in which the council was involved in a major programme of land assembly and in promoting with private interests the redevelopment of a rundown area. That was absolutely right and I hope that it will fall precisely within the exemptions that my right hon. Friend has announced.

The other proposal was to refurbish the pavilion in Bournemouth. Again, we proceeded with a partial privatisation of that asset, which all Conservative Members think is entirely laudable. I hope that that project will also fall within the terms of the exemptions announced by my right hon. Friend.

In general, the principle that we need to control public expenditure must be right. In particular, we need to take action where it is clear that avoidance measures are being taken by some local authorities that do not accept the need for such control. The regulations laid before the House on 9 March by my right hon. Friend are right and have been proved right by subsequent events.

10.50 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): In a way this is part two of the debate on the Local Government Finance Bill, because earlier we talked about new clauses to do with barter, and we are now talking about regulations to do with leaseback. I shall join other hon. Members in praying against the regulations.

Two sorts of arrangements will be caught by the regulations if they are approved by the House. One is sale and leaseback and the other is lease and leaseback. I entirely understand the Government's general economic policy, about which the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) has just spoken. I ask the hon. Gentleman to consider that in many respects, and not just for specific constituency reasons that we put forward when we seek to have an exemption granted, it would be quite consistent for him to argue the Government's policy while at the same time opposing the regulations. I hope that at least I have the hon. Gentleman's understanding of that.

One cannot be dogmatic in asserting that leaseback arrangements need necessarily mortgage the future or the massive increase in public expenditure that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West implied in his speech. We do not take the view that one ought to condone leaseback schemes that allow the elected representative of tomorrow to charge their poll tax payers a massive amount for the expenditure of today.

There can be perfectly reasonable leaseback schemes in which the method of arranging the lease and the finance does not build up the cost towards the end of the term. The cost is charged reasonably at the beginning, when people pay for what they receive. Many local authorities, mainly metropolitan authorities, will be caught by these arrangements, and not all those authorities are controlled by the same party. Outside London, Doncaster and Newcastle will be caught. Inside London, Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark, which are Labour-controlled, will be caught, as will Merton and Westminster which are controlled by the Conservatives, and Tower Hamlets and Richmond which are controlled by my colleagues.

All those authorities have schemes that were worked out over months or years with Government approval, and different arrangements were made along the lines that the Government said they were keen to support. Sometimes it is necessary to go further and to do a true sale or leaseback in order to raise money to meet the bills of today. When the Government impose enormous cuts on local government, that often drives local authorities to extreme positions.

Of course, the capital control system is the main reason for councils trying to be creative and to get around the controls. Like other hon. Members, I have always accepted that there must be an upper limit on capital expenditure and that the Government must set reasonable parameters. However, example by example, scheme by scheme, lease by lease is not the way in which the controls should be implemented.

I shall make a couple of points that, as far as I am aware, have not been made. First, I resent the fact that the scheme has not been subject to prior consultation. The Minister will know that in the past there has been consultation. I know that his first line of reply will be to say that this is a temporary scheme which runs only until October and that the regulations have a limited life and will have to be renewed. I understand that, but I can tell

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

the Minister and the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) whose speech I heard and understood, that the legal advice received by some councils suggests that, even in these regulations, the Government may be acting illegally.

I say that carefully. I do not make an allegation wildly but on the basis that it has been held in advance that regulations brought about without consultation and which would act to the severe detriment of local authorities who had entered into arrangements on the basis of expectation and prior practice could well be illegal. I warn the Government about that and hope that they do not find themselves in the same political difficulty as in the past when they have brought to the House measures which were later held to be illegal by the courts.

Secondly, I must repeat the complaint by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in the earlier debate. My research assistant wrote to the private secretary of the Secretary of State following the announcement of 9 March and she replied—no doubt in similar terms to the reply given to the hon. Member for Copeland—enclosing a copy of the notes which the press officers gave to

"members of the Press who asked for examples of the kind of local authority schemes which might be affected".

The words ring amusingly hollow. It continued:

"This was not a note prepared with formal distribution in mind."

The next day it managed to get into the papers, including *The Daily Telegraph*, the local papers in Southwark and Richmond and many others.

The trouble is that what was asserted was patently untrue. It is extremely poor practice for the Government to distribute to the press—although it was not an official document marked, "Press release from the DOE"—a list of facts and assertions about practices in local authorities which are inaccurate or insubstantial. Will the Minister explain how that came about? I have no doubt that those allegations, probably from Conservative party political sources, were disseminated and publicised unchecked and gave many of the councils concerned—including Conservative councils—a bad name.

Richmond, a council run by my party, was in that list. *The Daily Telegraph* stated:

"Richmond-upon-Thames planned to raise £10 million to finance a leisure complex by leaseback of assets."

Richmond has not attempted to raise money for a leisure complex by a leaseback scheme. The reference is entirely erroneous.

Tower Hamlets has two leaseback schemes which have had to be abandoned as a result of the 9 March statement. The first involved buying accommodation for providing temporary housing for homeless families before they were rehoused permanently in ordinary council stock. The temporary accommodation was outside the borough. Such accommodation can be used only in ways of which the Government approve. Tower Hamlets would have been doing just what the Government have been asking it to do —provide units for large families averaging six members and involving in total to 2,400 people. It would have been cheaper than bed and breakfast and would have used private finance.

The second scheme was to set up an "arm's-length" development company in Globe Town which would raise private money to buy sites locally which would be sold to housing associations and then leased back to the council. In this case, £300 million expenditure would have provided 800 homes for shared ownership schemes over three years and 300 to 400 ordinary rented homes for people in Tower Hamlets.

The great problem is that, if those schemes, or any others, are caught under the Government's proposals, the councils have to seek exemption. The theory is fine, but the reality is that sometimes, it never happens administratively, I can give a specific example to show that the after-the-event approval is not working, and things have clogged up in Marsham street. In February 1987, certain schemes were outlawed—for example, some in Tower Hamlets. The council sought approval for a scheme—the Minister may know it—involving the National Leasing and Finance Co., Merrill Lynch and the United Kingdom Housing Trust Ltd. As of today, 14 months after the request, no answer has been received.

Tower Hamlets wrote to the Department of the Environment seeking an exemption on 13 February 1987, received no reply, chased it on 3 April, received a holding reply on 8 April, heard no more. I raised it when I went with a deputation in the autumn; there was a letter back from the Department on 19 November, saying that it was seeking legal advice, and would be writing again. Tower Hamlets has still heard nothing, 14 months after asking for an exemption for a scheme that the Government encouraged. It is not acceptable for the Government to change the rules to say that they will make the decision and then not to decide anything. This scheme would have allowed a £50 million rented housing scheme, but it cannot happen.

I shall give an example from my constituency, to pre-empt what might otherwise be a similar delay. Southwark was mentioned in this list of what was envisaged by local councils. The article claimed:

"Southwark raised £30 million by leaseback of offices and fixtures and fittings in council houses. The deal will cost £96 million over 20 years."

Sadly, that, too, was completely false. Southwark did not raise the money, the scheme did not involve the leaseback, of council house fixtures and fittings, and money was to be used not for revenue purposes but as capital resources. The important thing is that Southwark is affected, because the announcement on 9 March has frozen expenditure, so all capital schemes have had a moratorium placed on them.

This is an excellent scheme that the Government have applauded as a partnership between the London docklands corporation, the council, the Housing Corporation, the Nationwide building society and Barratts. The Amos estate is the place, in the old, downtown area of Southwark docks. This is just the sort of scheme which the Government have smiled upon and encouraged. It involved a public, voluntary and private sector partnership, with the knowledge of the previous Minister for Housing, and approval intimated by officials.

The scheme was agreed and signed in September, and it was due to be opened by the Queen Mother in June. Now, it has effectively been banned retrospectively. This is ludicrous. We cannot do anything to help that, but although my constituents and my local council do not agree on everything, like any logical people, we ask the Government to get their act together, instead of producing regulations that ban a scheme that they have encouraged, and which partnership deals have been implemented, that is ready to go and due to be opened.

I hope that the Government will look at schemes such as that in the Amos estate in Southwark and realise that this sort of ex post facto legislation banning the lot and then seeking to undo the effects is the wrong way round. Leaseback, and sale and leaseback, can be a perfectly reasonable way forward. For heaven's sake, will Ministers not be so paranoid about local government?

11.3 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I second all that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) said, no doubt with a great deal more eloquence than I can command. He raised an important point: some quarter of all Government expenditure in this sector is conducted by local authorities, so we must examine it. After listening for the last half-hour, I wonder whether there is any form of control over local government expenditure that Opposition Members consider right and proper. We heard something from their Front Bench about a carrot. Carrots help one to see in the dark, and that would be an asset in the activities that Labour councils control.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to look at the difference between those local authorities that are selling or leasing assets merely to balance the books and those that are doing it to achieve some form of capital expenditure as they carry out many forms of worthwhile activities, particularly those authorised under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 and subsequent Acts. I believe that there are many enabling powers that we do not want to hamper.

I listened with great interest to details of the new scheme this afternoon and especially to the third part, or that part of it I could hear—I will read the report in *Hansard* tomorrow with interest—about the assets that can be finished and then owned or managed by the private sector. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can tell me when he replies whether the private sector will include building societies and housing corporations. Will they be able to take over the activities from local authorities?

I would have thought that these measures would have satisfied all but the most avid empire-builder in local authorities. They leave a great deal of scope and I welcome them. I also suggest that Opposition Members should not criticise any part of the proposals until they are quite sure that local authorities in their constituencies do not have scores of empty council houses.

11.5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): These regulations are a clear example of the Government believing in their own propaganda. They are an example of the Government legislating in haste and repenting at leisure.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said earlier, local authorities have got themselves into this situation not because they are wilful, or spendthrift or because they like dancing rings around the civil servants at the Department of the Environment, but because they have been forced into it by the circumstances imposed on them by central Government policies.

The Government have been panicked by what they have read in the newspapers. The mealy-mouthed comments, innuendos and downright lies now seem to inspire the Government in terms of their relationship with local government and it is causing them to make asses of themselves. That is precisely what the Government have been doing over this measure.

The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) spoke in that vein, as if this matter dealt with intransigent local authorities that just wanted to carry on spending money for the sake of it. I do not know what experience the hon. Gentleman has of local government. However, I want to inform the Minister that a whole range of Labour-controlled authorities in London have viable schemes which might now be threatened—although we cannot be sure whether they are threatened because further changes were announced earlier this evening.

We have already heard a litany of complaints from Conservative Members about how their local authorities will be affected. I hope that the Minister was able to listen to his hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) who described the kind of schemes that would be caught. I also hope that the Minister heard the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) detailing the schemes that might now be jeopardised by the Government's proposals.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): My hon. Friend may recall that one of the schemes referred to was intended to solve the problem of Airey houses and homes that have been classified as defective by the Government. Will my hon. Friend care to remind the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), who referred to scores and scores of empty council houses, that one of the great problems has been defective houses which councils have not been able to improve because no system has existed to enable them to do so? When people have bought those houses, they have been blighted because mortgage companies would not give mortgages for them unless the authorities could find solutions to those problems. It comes a little cheap from Conservative Members to refer to houses being boarded up if they do not look at the facts and the evidence and without providing the funds to do something about the problem.

Mr. Banks: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. This is an example of Conservative Members speaking from the depths of their prejudices and bigotry rather than from the experience that Opposition Members and others have of the problems that we have to confront in the inner cities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) mentioned a problem that also exists in the London borough of Newham where there are Taylor Woodrow Anglian blocks. Ronan Point is in the constituency of Newham, South. A development brief has been issued for the disposal and development of those blocks. They are all empty: 800 units of accommodation are now void because they are unsafe and cannot be used. Therefore, the council has become involved in a proposal that could involve an element of barter. I want to know from the Minister whether that particular scheme in the London borough of Newham involving the Taylor Woodrow Anglian blocks, which he knows much about, will go ahead under his new proposals.

I turn now to some of the "wilful" schemes in Labour boroughs. Hammersmith and Fulham council made a last-minute bid to escape the deadline and on the night of 9 March it entered into a £25 million deal which involved retaining the freehold on non-residential property and leasing it back through a company wholly owned by the

[Mr. Banks]

council. The money will be used both to refurbish existing housing stocks and to build new houses; what a waste of money—seeking to improve existing homes and build new ones. What an irresponsible council Hammersmith and Fulham has become! I mention also its 1988-89 HIP allocation of £14·3 million and its estimated bed-and-breakfast bill of £7 million. What do Conservative Members know about the problems that confront councils serving London's inner-city areas?

Haringey has been caught with a scheme comprising 45 units of accommodation, all destined for use as temporary housing. Lewisham has a scheme of 48 one and two-bedrooms flats caught by the rule change. It is another of the boroughs that now finds that it must allocate all its housing to homeless families, with the remainder going to urgent transfer cases. Those are the problems with which London local authorities are trying to deal, and by using the very schemes and arrangements which the Government and Conservative Members roundly condemn, without knowing precisely why they were proposed.

Before the Minister attempts to defend the indefensible, I may ask him what will be the situation for a number of the schemes in Newham. We have short-term private property having leases of from five to 10 years for the homeless. We have also the leases of office accommodation for more than three years, and leases and leaseback deals for newly built housing with housing associations or developers—for example, the Winsor and Moore Paragon schemes. Then there are the barter deals; package deals with developers, whereby the council receives land, works or buildings as part of the package; package deals undertaken through the medium of a private company, whereby land, works and so on are funded by private finance; and other developments with private developers, whereby the council receives land or works, depending on how the legislation is drawn up.

Those are just some examples, and while it sticks in the throats of many Labour local authorities to make so many deals in the private sector, they do so because they wish to look after the interests of the people in their boroughs. It is for that reason that they will sit down and sup with the devil—and that includes the Secretary of State, who would perhaps be an even less attractive proposition as a dinner companion than the devil himself.

With regard to private sector leasing, Newham's current policy is to lease private properties for the homeless for a period of between five and 10 years, without needing—at present—to use any capital resources. As from 10 March 1988, such leases will result in prescribed expenditure to the full freehold value. Newham's schemes are designed not to get around capital controls but to alleviate the homeless crisis that exists there. It is a major crisis. In 1983-84, Newham was spending only £52,000 per year on bed-and-breakfast charges. In 1987-88, that increased to more than £5 million. The borough must do something to deal with that grave social problem, which afflicts not only Newham but the whole of London's inner city.

The Government deny councils the resources to deal with the problem on the ground, as it were, by building new council accommodation. However, councils are bound to enter into such arrangements and it would be a dereliction of their duty if they did not do so. I hope that when the Minister replies he will say that where a borough such as Newham has made barter or leaseback deals to deal honestly with its housing problem, those schemes will be approved by the Department of the Environment.

I have already mentioned the Taylor Woodrow-Anglian blocks. Let me also mention the Woodlands estate, the Upton park goods yard/Cleves road development, and the docklands and other planning proposals. All are known to the Department. Letters have been going backwards and forwards. At least, they have been going towards the Department; we have not received many replies yet. Will the Minister give me an assurance that tomorrow he will go to his Department and ask his civil servants to dig out all correspondence relating to the various deals that have been received from the London borough of Newham, and that a speedy and urgent reply will result?

Earlier, the Secretary of State made it clear in a very disarming way that when the announcement was made on 9 March he did not know very much about the position. He now realises that it was not as he had thought: that it was not as he had read it in *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard*. It did not resemble the propaganda put out by Conservative Central Office. It did not even resemble what had been caught up in the fevered minds of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues on the Front Bench and at No. 10 Downing street.

It was a case of local authorities, both Conservative and Labour, trying to deal with the problems that now confront them—many of those problems exacerbated by central Government policies. Because of the way that they have done this, they should gain the Government's support, not their opposition. I hope that the Minister will at least be able to tell me something good for once, so that I can go back and tell the people of Newham.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): This is, in a sense, the second part of a debate that was started earlier this evening when we discussed the new clauses to the Local Government Finance Bill. Perhaps I could start by making some general remarks about the regulations, and then reply to the specific points that have been raised.

The regulations have two main purposes. First, they shorten from 20 years to three the maximum length of lease that is exempt from prescribed expenditure control. Secondly, they provide that certain capital receipts shall not give rise to additional spending within the capital control system.

It has been suggested that the regulations mark a major new restriction on local authority activity. That is not the case. The regulations are a response to a growth in local authority activity outside the capital control system. The previous regulations exempted from capital controls leases which were for less than 20 years, and which were not building leases in the sense that it was envisaged that buildings would be built on the land for the local authorities concerned.

If local authorities had been content to accept the spirit of the regulations then, there would have been no need for action. In the event, however, leasing has become a growth industry. We have seen a flurry of leases for a period of 20 years less one day, sometimes with recitals that it is the

intention of the parties that they should be renewed after 20 years. We have seen elaborate option agreements which appear to have no purpose other than to avoid the provisions on building leases.

The regulations therefore reduce the exemption period from 20 years to three. They also remove the exemption from leases that are part of a wider transaction. That leads me to the question of lease and leaseback.

I fully accept that lease and leaseback and sale and leaseback are well recognised commercial techniques. Their commercial purpose is well known. They are a means of allowing a loan to be raised on the security of property. They are in fact loans, although they may not in law be loans.

There is no reason why a local authority should need to raise a loan by this means, other than to avoid borrowing controls. Local authorities have exellent credit ratings, and the Local Government Act 1972 secures the loans that they raise on their revenues. The regulations therefore provide that a lease taken by a local authority is always within capital controls if the authority already holds a freehold or superior leasehold interest in the property.

One of the principles underlying the 1980 Act is what I might call the "duality" of prescribed expenditure and capital receipts. If a local authority disposes of an asset, or ceases to possess an asset, it is treated as if it had received a capital receipt equal to the amount of prescribed expenditure that it would have had to incur to acquire the asset. Regulation 2 preserves that principle. It provides that no capital receipt is generated on the acquisition of which no prescribed expenditure, or nil prescribed expenditure, was scored.

The regulations have a temporary effect. They will expire on 1 October, and will be replaced by permanent regulations on or before that date. That is because they were of necessity introduced without prior consultation and with immediate effect. I regret that experience dictated that the legislative changes had to be introduced without consultation. I drew attention earlier, however, when we were discussing the Local Government Finance Bill on Report, to what our experience has been. I am sure that the House will accept that it was prudent to announce our decision in the way that we did on 9 March.

Mr. Tony Banks: On 9 March, the Secretary of State said:

"if time permits, we intend to legislate, in the autumn, for a total reform of the capital control system."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 333.]

Does that remain the policy of central Government?

Mr. Chope: Certainly. It is the policy of central Government to reform the capital control system. We hope to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to bring that into effect.

In recognition of experience on consultation, the regulations are temporary. We are consulting the local authority associations on what changes should be made before permanent regulations are laid. Even tomorrow, there will be a meeting between the officials of the Department of the Environment and local authority representatives to discuss some of the detail of the regulations.

One of the proposed relaxations concerns the transfer of new town houses. The present regulations provide that, where a local authority has acquired assets since the start of the present control system without incurring prescribed expenditure, the disposal of those assets will not generate a capital receipt. This is to ensure that local authorities that have acquired assets outside the capital control system do not get credited with spending power within that system if they sell them.

It has been brought to our attention that this will prevent district councils which have taken transfers of new town houses and other assets from having the benefit of receipts from sales. That was not the intention of the regulations, and the anomaly will be corrected in relation to new town assets and other transferred assets when permanent regulations are introduced. The Department will take administrative action in respect of disposals in the meantime.

I do not think that it is appropriate in the time available to enter into a long discussion about the list of schemes that was released to the press and the circumstances that surrounded that. That is history. It was not part of an organised press release. I am sure that the Government would have been criticised by Opposition Members if we had not had available some examples of the sort of abuses that were taking place.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I ask the Minister to comment on a short paragraph in a letter that I received from Redditch borough council. It concerns a series of barter schemes that would have created a number of dwellings for the people of Redditch. The paragraph reads:

"However, there would be distinct advantages if the Secretary of State could be persuaded to exempt barter schemes which were already the subject of agreement on 9th March, but where the assets to be acquired under the agreement had not yet been transferred to the Council."

Can the Minister give any guidance to the chief executive of Redditch in the light of that paragraph?

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt with that issue when we were debating new clauses that were tabled on Report to the Local Government Finance Bill, especially those that dealt specifically with barter and interim pipeline arrangements. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the *Official Report* for details of the concessions that were made.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I heard what the Minister said about the press release or handout on 9 March. Will he give the House an undertaking that in future the Department will not issue, formally or informally, documents that are clearly inaccurate and have not been checked that bring local government into unnecessary disrepute?

Mr. Chope: The document was much more accurate than some Opposition Members might care to admit. It made it clear that there were many schemes in the pipeline and others that had already been implemented. Not all the schemes had come to the notice of the Department in detail. Our experience is that councils are reticent about some schemes. The substance of the document was to a large extent correct. In a letter to the chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, my right hon. Friend set out the issue clearly. That document is a public letter that has been released to the press.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) referred to the EEC grant to be paid on the mining museum in Wakefield. That has nothing to do with the regulations that are before us. He also raised a point about

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agreements that are already entered into. If a local authority took a lease under an agreement to which both parties were fully committed on or before 9 March, the new regulations do not apply. They apply to agreements that become binding on or after 10 March.

The hon. Gentleman referred also to the Audit Commission report. My right hon. Friend also referred to that report in his remarks in the debate on the new clauses. We accept the point that the Commission made, although not the wider conclusions that the hon. Member for Normanton drew. The report is relevant to barter and to the new clauses that the Opposition did not vote against, but not to the regulations, which are about leasing and not property rationalisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) asked for an explanation of the reasons for the measures announced on 9 March. From his description of the schemes, they are affected, if at all, by the new clauses that we debated earlier, rather than by the regulations. I urge him to read in the *Official Report* the explanation that my right hon. Friend gave when moving the new clauses. I urge him and the council in the area that he represents to consider the terms of the concessions announced earlier.

I confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) that, for the purposes of the regulations, building societies and housing associations are classed as private sector.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) raised several points. He did not tell us the extent to which, in the past, Newham incurred capital expenditure. It has now accumulated capital debt of £450 million. That is the figure for 1986-87. That is a £2,199 debt per head of population. The hon. Gentleman wants to allow that council to have freedom to incur more and more debt without any restraint whatever. We have a capital control system to prioritise capital spending by local authorities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I specifically put to the Minister a point about delay in dealing with exemptions, and cited the example of a 14-month delay. Will the Minister admit to the House that that is entirely unacceptable and that, if he wants to go ahead with the scheme, it will not be on the basis that local government cannot get an exemption or a reason from the Department?

Mr. Chope: I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister who is responsible for that matter.

Again, schemes were introduced in which approvals can be given. Some of them have turned out to be a lot more complicated than was at first thought.

The Government have an excellent record on capital controls and on capital allocations to local authorities. Indeed, in 1987-88, there was gross capital expenditure by local authorities of over £6·7 billion. That is 30 per cent. of all public sector capital expenditure, civil and military.

The debate is about definitions. It is about bringing within the control system those schemes of a capital nature that should be brought within the control system. Surely that is sensible and should commend itself to the House.

11.28 pm

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister has not convinced his colleagues or the Opposition. Each hon. Member who has spoken in the debate has outlined to him the shortcomings and problems that, because of the regulations, authorities in their constituencies must meet.

The Minister said that the press release from the Secretary of State's Department was accurate. Yet local authorities have submitted evidence to show that the statements in the press release were totally inaccurate. The Minister should have agreed that it should have been withdrawn. Local authorities have been slighted by some schemes that were genuinely entered into in accordance with the law and in line with the previous regulations that were set by the Department of the Environment.

Referring to the Wakefield scheme, I take it that there will be no problem with EEC grants financing local authority capital schemes and that the Minister has assured the House that they will not be taken into consideration.

Finally, I make one point concerning the question of the 20 years less one day. In Wakefield, there is a residuary body scheme for the provision of office accommodation. Is the Minister saying that the residuary body will be able to reclaim that scheme in 20 years' time? That was the implication which the Minister gave in his reply to a question from one of my hon. Friends. In view of the uncertainty of the regulations, I ask the Minister to withdraw them. If he will not, we shall vote against them.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes: 147, Noes: 274.

Division No. 276] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alun Michael and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'r's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stam'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*

Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

MATRIMONIAL PROCEEDINGS (TRANSFERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Committee tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Redundancy Payments (Local Government)

That the draft (Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 16th March 1988, be approved.*—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With the leave of the House I shall put together the Questions on items 5 and 6 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.)

Double Taxation Relief

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Venezuela) Order 1988 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 29th February.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Turkey) Order 1988 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 29th February.*—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Social Security

11.43 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I wish to present a petition on behalf of the Leeds Church Action on Poverty Group and residents of the city of Leeds. This petition is a protest against the reductions in social security benefit that have been taking their toll on the disposable incomes of many of the less well-off since the beginning of this month. The benefit reductions and the result of the implementation of the reform of social security which, despite great public criticism, became the Social Security Act 1986, have resulted in cuts in housing benefit in particular. Its effects are now being felt and, my petitioners believe, will lead to a real increase in poverty for many people in our society. The petition reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will repeal the Social Security Act 1986 and introduce a social security system that protects all the poor in our society.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Hartland Point Coastal Rescue Station

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.44 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I am grateful to the Minister for being here to reply to this debate and to my colleagues, my hon. Friends the Members for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) and for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) for their support.

The background to the debate is the Secretary of State's decision to transfer the Hartland search and rescue responsibilities to Swansea and to close the sub-centre. The Secretary of State was good enough to see me immediately he announced his decision and I expressed the concern of the public and myself at the decision. My right hon. Friend offered me the opportunity of having the chief coastguard, Captain Peter Harris, with me for a public meeting. The purpose of the meeting—as I suggested—was to test the community's response and to try to find evidence that would enable me to persuade my hon. Friend to change his mind. That meeting has taken place and the main point of my speech is that the community would prefer to keep Hartland as it is.

The sub-centre should be kept because the coast is treacherous and dangerous and local fishermen are at risk. The growth in tourism has been enormous and the north Devon link road and the Okehampton bypass are rapidly developing. Facilities are being provided to tempt local people and holiday-makers to use the sea more. There are now five adventure training centres in the Bideford area alone, with sea canoeing, surfing, sailboarding, coast and cliff activities offered. There is an estuary ski centre, two rowing clubs, four small sailing clubs, the north Devon yacht club and other marinas planned.

Perhaps a thousand people, many of them children, use the Bideford bay and estuary each week. Is it any wonder that many of the facilities provided by the search and rescue service help those users of the sea? Indeed, we encourage people to come to Devon and Cornwall to enjoy our coastline. Both the population and the tourist industry are growing.

At the same time as the great growth in amateur and professional activity on the sea and cliffs, Trinity House is ceasing to maintain the Bideford bell buoy and the leading lights. The Royal National Lifeboat Institute is withdrawing the Bristol channel lifeboat at Clovelly. Now we are faced with the closure of the Hartland search and rescue sub-centre. As a result of those three impending, separate moves, there has been a severe and natural loss of confidence within the fishing community, among other local sailors, their families and visitors, about future safety at sea.

The swiftness of the provision of the information did not help. The local coastguards heard of their impending transfer from the BBC. Their worries were immediately passed on and shared by the entire community. The loss of the coastguards and their families will be felt most keenly by the community who know them personally as well as in their professional capacity; they are admired and valued. People are also worried about the auxiliaries whose part-time work is also at risk. In such a small town, the 20 or so jobs matter very much. Work is not so prolific in our area that we can afford to lose even a single part-time job.

The entire community wants the Minister to keep the Hartland search and rescue sub-centre open and based at home. If the change must go ahead, can the Minister give me any assurance regarding the job security of the auxiliaries? Indeed, is there a chance that he could strengthen their role? Is there no work that could be left behind—no tasks connected with the maritime rescue sub-centre that the auxiliary rescue company could take up? The Minister will be aware that the auxiliaries are a hard-working and dedicated body of people. With the impending loss of the coastguards, it would be good to extend their service to the community still further.

If the proposed closure does take effect, I am pleased to hear that there will be no job loss among the coastguards, but that they will be transferred.

Our sector officer, of course, will remain. Would it be possible to strengthen his post if not by the appointment of a second sector officer, perhaps by concentrating his geographical area or in some other way? He is our community policeman in sea-going terms and he must not be stretched too far. Indeed, he will be the only full-time officer left.

As for Swansea—that dreadful place which strikes fear into the hearts of all at Hartland—there is a rumour that there will be inadequate staffing there, that there will not be sufficient officers on the watch and that not enough people will be in charge. Can the Minister assure me that there will be adequate staffing at Swansea? After all, it will have to cope with a double work load. Double the number of accidents will be sent through to the Swansea area.

There is a great worry that the telephone system will be inadequate. People who dial 999 complain constantly that they cannot get through. Will the telephone system be strengthened so that 999 calls will get through? That still leaves the fear that the general public, who report so many accidents, will not bother to make a trunk call. It is easy to make a local call, and we hope that they will still take the trouble when it becomes a long distance call.

Great concern was expressed at the meeting about the problem of distance. Everyone accepts that the new technology high-frequency radios will be effective, but not everyone has them. Many of the very small sailors, including sailboarders, do not have such equipment. However much we press them, they just will not have it.

But will the distance matter in terms of safety? Some people expressed fears about the distance because of the radio. Can the Minister assure me that he will monitor the speed of responses and that, in the coming months, if the decision takes effect, he will look carefully to see whether the response is genuinely as rapid as though the local coastguards were still at Hartland? Can he tell us honestly that it will be as swift and effective? That is the deepest fear of everyone, allied with the natural worry that, in the necessarily lengthy period of transfer, the coastguards based in Swansea will not know the local coastline well.

I was reassured by Captain Peter Harris's statement that he was transferring local coastguards more slowly so that they could teach their colleagues, but, as one local fisherman said: "They know me. They know where I fish, and when I get into trouble they know where I am. How can anyone in Swansea have that local knowledge?" That was a personal statement, but it expressed the community's fears.

I have a petition signed by 1,300 people which was gathered together swiftly in only five days. Treble the number of signatures could have been attracted had the

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

period been longer. One of the most important points made at the meeting was the need for a visual watch. I know, because Captain Harris told me, that we have not had a visual watch at Hartland since 1983, and that in many ways it is an archaic mthod of preserving safety at sea. As one of the coastguards said, at the exact moment that an accident happens he may be looking sideways. He may not be getting a cup of coffee, but something else may happen. The visual watch may not provide the guarantee of safety that the community believes it does.

None the less, especially with our great influx of tourists, I believe that a visual watch is important. The 1,300 people who signed the petition that was brought to me at 8 am on Sunday morning certainly feel that most deeply. Can the Minister reassure me that he will guarantee to set a visual watch when it is genuinely needed?

I cannot accept the Secretary of State's decision with peace of mind for sailors without the Minister's guarantee of continuing safety through these and other measures.

11.53 pm

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): It is normally a great pleasure to ally myself with my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), and I do so wholeheartedly, but not gladly. Now is not the time to reduce cover for the small boat brigade, let alone for the airbed brigade who bob gently out to sea on the tide, knowing nothing of the sea and its ways. My hon. Friend's constituents know about the sea, and have preserved the watch for a long time.

I understand entirely the reasons for the ministerial decision and I do not query it, but my constituents from the Ilfracombe and Croyde coastguard stations have come to me, not alarmed for jobs—as my hon. Friend said, the jobs are safe—but desperately alarmed for the safety of those who venture out in small boats without the knowledge that is desperately needed. For that reason, I am honoured, as always, to ally myself with my hon. Friend's views. I ask the Minister to keep a most careful eye on what happens. One child lost is too many, and if that loss can be blamed on the loss of the coastguard, neither he nor we will be easily forgiven.

11.55 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I, too, am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) for including the interests of north Cornwall, and the part of the coast that joins Hartland, in this Adjournment debate.

Let me reiterate two or three of my hon. Friend's points. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to clarify exactly what the future will be for the auxiliaries, because there is great concern among those who are involved in the tourist industry, and know that coast well, about the difficulties that visitors get into. They also know that many more people are indulging in adventurous sports and pastimes off the coast, which can cause considerable difficulties.

I also look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister says about Swansea and staffing there. Naturally, there is a lack of peace of mind as a result of the announcement, which arises in no small way from the lack of confidence in Swansea's ability to deal with the problems—given that it is so far away.

My hon. Friend is quite right to have raised this issue and she is doing a great service to the people of Hartland, as well as to those who visit it while on holiday.

11.57 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Good fortune has shone on my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and secured her the opportunity to raise both the proposed closure in March next year of Hartland Point maritime co-ordination sub-centre and the adequacy of coastguard services planned for the north and west Devon coast.

Understandably, my hon. Friend seeks reassurance about coastguard services, not only on behalf of residents in her constituency but with an eye to the welfare of the thousands of visitors who flock to the area that she represents and to its attractive coastline.

My hon. Friend raised a number of important points. She referred to the huge number of people who use the coastal sea, especially in the summer, to concerns about Trinity House and Royal National Lifeboat Institution changes in the area, to the possible redeployment of those no longer required in the Hartland Point centre, to the possibility of a second full-time officer, on changes to reduce the sector officer's work load, to the adequacy of manning at Swansea and to the monitoring of the speed and efficiency of rescue services. I shall endeavour to cover all those points in my reply. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) also raised the question of breeches buoys and rocket facilities, and I shall cover those points too.

For many people, including some hon. Members, the role and duties of Her Majesty's coastguard are something of a mystery. For that reason, it may be helpful if I start by explaining what the coastguards do and how they are organised to do it.

The United Kingdom coastline is divided into 110 sectors, each of which is manned by a group of part-time, but thoroughly trained, local auxiliary coastguards who perform varied duties from cliff rescue to visual watches at times of danger, under the command of a regular sector officer. The auxiliaries are recruited, trained and administered by the sector officer, a full-time professional coastguard.

Around our coast, there are 24 rescue co-ordination centres, whose job it is to receive information on incidents requiring search and rescue and to bring into operation the most suitable form of rescue service. The rescue co-ordination centres are manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and they receive their information from satellite or radio distress signals, 999 calls and local coastguard sectors. The VHF radio is constantly monitored and, by means of 39 direction-finding VHF cross-reference systems, it is able to locate, or nearly locate, the source of the VHF distress signal.

Each co-ordination centre is responsible for a certain number of VHF aerials. It is a very effective system. By cross-linking one set of aerials with another, one can tell the precise direction from which a signal is coming. Where the direction lines from the two sets of aerials cross, one can identify the spot or be very near to the spot from which

the distress signal has come. The rescue co-ordination centre calls out the appropriate rescue service—the RNLI, a helicopter, or the auxiliary cliff rescue service.

I should add that even though it is not technically the responsibility of the coastguard, it also helps non-mariners who are in trouble on our coastline. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the constant work that is done in that way by the auxiliary and full-time coastguards.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North raised the question of breeches buoys. At the time of its introduction well over a century ago, the breeches buoy was the only practical way of taking survivors off stranded vessels. Not only has stranding become much more rare, but most vessels that run ashore do not break up quickly. The possibility of rescue by boat or aircraft, or even by walking ashore when weather and tide permit, have led to the end in practical terms of the breeches buoy. On many parts of the coast it has not been used at all in living memory, and in other parts it has been employed very infrequently. Across the nation it has been used to bring people ashore only twice in five years, and even then it is doubtful whether it was the only or best method to use. Consequently, the efforts and money devoted to this complicated, limited and largely unused system are being diverted to other forms of assistance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North also asked about rocket-firing lines—I think that is what he had in mind—to people in trouble in the sea, including those on air beds. Such rockets are not very accurate and may even puncture or otherwise damage the air bed containing the unfortunate person that it is hoped to rescue. That is not a wholly desirable way to proceed.

An immense amount of technological advance lies behind the provision of rescue services. New methods and new equipment provide ways of achieving an improved service for mariners in distress, whether they are on large commercial vessels, fishing boats or on one of the huge fleet of pleasure craft that crowd our coastline, especially the attractive parts such as those in the constituency of my hon. Friend.

I shall now turn from the general situation to the precise arrangements on the north and west Devon coasts, and shall deal first with visual watches. A visual watch from the Hartland coastguard look-out station is of limited value because one cannot see much of the near coast. However, there are very good long-distance sight lines. In practice, the visual watch is generally kept by Land Rover-equipped teams on appropriate vantage points and that has not been mounted continuously for five years. Visual casualty risk watches have instead been mounted and will continue to be mounted when the risks to mariners can be expected to rise.

That covers about 30 per cent. of the time and involves particular situations—either severe weather or a sudden deterioration in the weather or expected severe weather. The other characteristics which call for extra visual watches to be mounted are when there are many pleasure craft about. That means regattas, weekends in the summer, bank holidays and similar situations. In those situations when there are large numbers of craft about, especially when there are many amateurs on them, and in deteriorating weather conditions, extra visual watch is mounted and will continue to be mounted.

In the light of my hon. Friend's representations, I can say that it is intended to strengthen the auxiliary rescue company at Hartland Point by deployment of additional auxiliaries—either some or all of those now tied up in the Hartland Point rescue centre and not on visual watch duties. I am sure that that announcement will reassure my hon. Friend and some of her constituents. I can promise that no compulsory redundancies will arise from the proposals for the Hartland Point rescue co-ordination centre.

My hon. Friend raised the question of the sector officer and asked me whether a second, back-up sector officer could be appointed or whether his work load could be eased so that he could give more time to that area. I can make a second announcement tonight, which I am sure my hon. Friend will welcome, that it is now proposed that the sector officer's length of coastline should be reduced by one third, and that the number of auxiliary companies for which he is responsible should be reduced from five to three. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be pleased to report that.

Another point raised by my hon. Friend, which slightly puzzles me, concerned the adequacy of the 999 system. The coastguard deserves considerable praise for its ingenuity over the matter of the 999 system. It has aligned the coastguard sectors with British Telecom's 999 call districts. As a result, if one makes a 999 call and asks for the coastguard, British Telecom automatically connects the call to the right coastguard rescue co-ordination centre. Of course, if someone from north Devon wants to get in touch with Swansea, he will not be successful because at the moment he will be put in touch with Hartland Point, as British Telecom is tied in with the coastguard. Once the change has taken place, he will automatically be put on to Swansea. My hon. Friend can be reassured on that point. I add that there is no question of her constituents worrying about long-distance calls, as such calls are automatically free.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of the merging of districts. There is a technical benefit from merging two districts on opposite sides of the Bristol channel. In a variety of ways this will simplify radio surveillance. Because of the configuration of the coastline, the best location for some of the VHF aerials is on the opposite side of the Bristol channel. Thus, Hartland has control of an area of Cardiff and Swansea is connected to an aerial site at Combe Martin behind Ilfracombe. By opetating all the aerial sites from one operations room, mutual interference will be avoided and there will be an improvement in the technical operation of the radio side of the rescue operations services. Because all the aerials are expected to be retained, there will be no diminution in the cover. The changes in the routes of the control lines and the concentration of traffic in bigger, better-manned stations will help.

It has been asked why the merger is not the other way round, with Hartland being retained instead of Swansea. That is because substantially better facilities which are necessary to cope with major problems, particularly major disasters, are available at Swansea. Unlike Hartland, the building is permanent and has capacity for expansion.

The coastguard depends for its effectiveness on local knowledge and it takes considerable pains to enable watchkeepers to gain and acquire familiarity with the full extent of their guard, not only by visiting and exploring, but by developing an intricate network of contacts which can be used to obtain up-to-date information. Above all, the auxiliaries, under the regular sector officers, who live

[Mr. David Mitchell]

all along the coast, provide invaluable sources of background, and immediate operational intelligence when required.

I can add to that that there are a number of other ways in which contact is made for example—with the harbour-master. It may help if I add that when the change to Swansea takes place, not only will the senior officer being added to the team at Swansea come from Hartland, and bring that knowledge, but it is anticipated that probably four others with some knowledge will go from Hartland. That will ensure not only that there is a pool of such knowledge but that those who are responsible at Swansea will be going across the Bristol channel meeting people along the coast, talking to the auxiliaries and the sector officers, getting to know their contacts so that they know to whom they are talking and the conditions that they are describing.

My hon. Friend expressed anxieties about the recent RNLI decision to replace the Lundy lifeboat with an improved craft at Appledore. That is entirely outwith my responsibilities. However, I have to say that the overall lifeboat coverage in the area has been substantially improved by the introduction of the Tyne class boats at Tenby, Padstow and the Mumbles as well as at Appledore. Furthermore, one of the new fast carriage boats is due to be stationed at Ilfracombe next year, and that RNLI capability is certainly much appreciated by the coastguards.

The House will be aware of the helicopter coverage of the area, with RAF search and rescue helicopters providing first-class cover in the Bristol channel by day as well as by night, and in thick weather.

My hon. Friend mentioned the important point of the staffing level of regular coastguard offices at Swansea. This will be augmented to take account of the increased responsibilities of the station. Four extra watchkeeping officers and an extra officer to reinforce the district management team will be provided, at least until such time as the merger has settled down. Some of these, and at least the senior officer reinforcing Swansea, will come from the north Devon coast, bringing with them their intimate local knowledge. Moreover, the full-time senior watch officers at Swansea will be visiting north Devon to examine the coastline, and, as I described earlier, to meet the sector officers, auxiliary companies, harbour masters, RNLI, coxswains and so on.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of monitoring the response. We see no reason why response times should be changed, but we shall monitor them. On average, there are 230 marine incidents a year in the Hartland district. Each incident will continue to be investigated in the future to determine whether there have been any delays, and whether the response was correct.

We are approaching the summer season, when many more people take to their boats, some of them amateurs, and some of them very professional. It is time to remind them of the need to make sure that they have VHF radio with them, especially if they go out of sight of land. It would be extremely foolish to sail without VHF radio, which gives the means to summon assistance if need be. Those who are not familiar with the coast should ask the coastguard for advice before setting out, and at all times people should ensure that they have life-saving equipment on board.

My hon. Friend can take back to north and west Devon the knowledge that she has secured from me the announcements of increased staffing levels at Swansea, the reduction in the length of coastline covered by the full-time sector officer looking after the auxiliaries, the strengthening in the auxiliary forces at the Hartland area by redeployment of some of those now employed in the maritime rescue sub-centre, and the continual monitoring of the speed of response to any incidents that occur in this area. I hope that with those four announcements, my hon. Friend will feel that her time in this short Adjournment debate has been well spent.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 April 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SAINT BENNET FINK BURIAL GROUND (CITY OF LONDON) BILL *[Lords]*

Read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

SCOTTISH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (OBAN SOUTH PIER) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Montebello Agreement

1. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying new tactical air-to-surface missiles under the Montebello decision.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): The agreement by NATO Defence Ministers at Montebello in 1983 did not include specific decisions on such matters. SACEUR was asked to come forward with specific proposals, which were presented to Ministers in 1985. All these continue to be discussed with the individual nations concerned. The time scale associated with the deployment of new systems will depend in the first instance on the choice of system and on development and production decisions which have yet to be taken.

Ms. Primarolo: Did not the Minister, in a written answer on 21 March, admit that the decision for tactical air-to-surface missiles was taken at, and dates from, the Montebello agreement? Will the Minister continue his confessions to agree that those missiles will carry nuclear warheads? Will he further agree that the carrying of those missiles by aircraft is an escalation and that, in a reply to me on 21 January, when I pointed out that the most likely form of tactical weapons would be air-launched cruise, he said that I was grossly misinformed?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must ask her question.

Mr. Younger: There was a recommendation in principle from the Montebello meeting to consider those matters and, as I said in my answer, they are being considered.

The objective of devising an air-launched air-to-surface missile, if it can be done, would be to deliver the missile to the target effectively. At present this is done by free-fall bombs. When those become out of date a new method will be needed, and this is one possibility that we are examining.

Mr. Whitney: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, given, particularly, the continuing modernisation of the Soviet nuclear and conventional capabilities, it remains essential that we continue to improve our capabilities in accordance with the Montebello decision?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and I am sure he will be well aware that the Soviet Union has vigorously been updating its equipment. For instance, longer-range, more accurate SS21 missiles are being brought into service, dual-capable aircraft are being modernised the build-up of Backfire bombers continues and short-range, stand-off nuclear weapons are also being deployed, so it is hardly an option that we can ignore.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Secretary of State will recall that when NATO last embarked on its modernisation proposals it led to the deployment of cruise missiles. It also adopted a dual-track system whereby modernisation took place at the same time as negotiations. If NATO has decided in principle to modernise tactical and battlefield nuclear weapons—we hope that it has not and will not do so—why not follow the same principle as last time and, if it is necessary to modernise, why not modernise at the same time as negotiating, especially as the Soviet Union appears to have a superiority in tactical and battlefield nuclear weapons?

Mr. Younger: It is extraordinary for the right hon. Gentleman to say that we should not modernise our existing weapons because—[HON. MEMBERS: "He did not say that."] That is what the right hon. Gentleman said. If he did not say that, perhaps he will intervene in a moment to say that he did not, but, as I understood him, he said that those weapons should not be modernised, which means that we would have out-of-date weapons. I see no argument for having out-of-date weapons.

The dual-track decision has been immensely successful. We had the INF deal because of that decision, which the Conservative party advocated but which the Labour party denied. We are still proceeding on a dual-track decision. Although we may have to modernise some of our existing weapons, we are vigorously pursuing reductions in strategic systems, the abolition of chemical weapons and reductions in conventional weapons. All that means a very effective dual-track decision, which the right hon. Gentleman should admit is working extraordinarily well.

Meteorological Office

2. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to privatise any of the services of the Meteorological Office; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The Meteorological Office is a candidate for agency status within the Ministry of Defence. In the process of reaching decisions on its future operating framework we shall consider whether any of its current activities might be carried out more appropriately in the private sector.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the collection of meteorological data is a monopoly,

interpretation of that data certainly is not? Does he agree also that the Meteorological Office could well benefit from being placed in the same position as a range of organisations, from insurance companies to racing tipsters, in having to base the reliability of current forecasts on past performance? Does my hon. Friend agree that, at the very least, something must be done about the office's appalling service to the public over the Easter break?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure my hon. Friend appreciates that meteorology is an inexact science which must deal with extremely difficult and complex data. The Meteorological Office is not a monopoly in the sense that it keeps to itself all the data that it collects. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, the collection of that data is an expensive business and, if the data are to be made available to commercial organisations, that should be done on a commercial basis.

Mr. Heffer: As the Government have been afflicted by privatisation madness, can the Minister assure us that the Government have no intention of privatising the armed forces?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not think that that matter arises out of a question on the Metereological Office.

United States Forces

3. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of United States forces stationed in Britain; and how many bases they have.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): There are usually around 30,000 United States service personnel in the United Kingdom. We currently make available 66 bases and facilities for United States forces in this country, the majority of which are small support facilities.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that the recent publication "Over Here", produced by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, lists 157 such bases, not 66 that the hon. Gentleman mentioned? Will the hon. Gentleman assure us that this army of occupation of 30,000 personnel is not spying on any British citizens or political activities in this country? Will the hon. Gentleman further assure— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) must keep his gestures to himself.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister further assure the House that the British Government have complete control over all activities in United States bases and that they will not allow those forces to deny civil liberties to people demonstrating outside them or to those who observe cruise missiles while they are touring around this country? Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House that it is time for the United States forces to leave this country and stop harassing British citizens and making Britain a nuclear aircraft carrier for the Pentagon?

Mr. Stewart: Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman and many of his friends in the Labour party think, the presence of United States bases in this country is the surest guarantee of American support for European defence. As for the publications of CND, the activities of that body tend to be highly misleading and inaccurate and it sounds as though this latest one is no exception.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that our friends and allies the Americans are here very much at our invitation and that we have every confidence in their activities in this country in joining us in defending not only the United Kingdom but NATO and all our other allies?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, indeed. I warmly support what my hon. Friend has said. The removal of American bases from the United Kingdom would put at risk the whole basis of the United States commitment to the defence of Europe. I cannot think of anything more damaging for the security of this country or our Western allies than what Opposition Members propose.

Mr. James Lamond: How many United States civilian personnel are attached to support services to the 66 bases?

Mr. Stewart: I mentioned about 30,000 United States service personnel. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman even an approximate figure for non-service personnel, but if he tables a question on those lines I shall see what information I can give him.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal for short and single questions, rather than catalogues, which take a lot of time.

Military Personnel (Relocation)

4. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel have been redeployed away from London and the south-east since 1983.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): Between July 1983 and July 1987 the proportion of service personnel in the United Kingdom deployed outside London and the south-east rose from 61 to 62 per cent.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I accept that the operational efficiency of the forces must always come first, but will my hon. Friend look at ways of increasing the number of civilian and office staff that are transferred away from the south-east? Does he agree that such a transfer would bring savings in salaries and costs and would help recruitment? If that involved the sale of property in the south-east, my hon. Friend could make a profit for his Department.

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend's sentiments. It is relevant to note that by the end of this year about 1,400 civilian posts will have been deployed to Glasgow, and of that number 1,000 will have been employed locally.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the policy of concentrating military forces in a few selected areas is not a good one for the long-term future of ensuring that the armed forces not only protect the community but are part of it, over as wide an area as possible—not just a few areas?

Mr. Freeman: I agree. However, one must bear in mind operational constraints, in the sense that many of the Army units in the south-east of England in and around London are for the reinforcement of the British Army of the Rhine, so the closer they are to Germany, the better.

AWACS

5. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had on improvements to the offset arrangements on the contract to buy the AWACS early warning system from the United States of America.

Mr. Younger: The Boeing company has every intention of fulfilling the contractual undertaking on the AWACS offset programme. My Department keeps in close touch with the company on the detail of the arrangements.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure the Secretary of State remembers that when he made his announcement to the House in December 1986 he said that for every £100 we spend on Boeing's E3A, £130 would be spent in contracts to British companies. Given that Plessey has said that rather than having had an expected £150 million worth of contracts in the first year it has had less than 1 per cent. of that, is not the faith of the Ministry of Defence somewhat misplaced, and were not the warnings from Opposition parties that that offset agreement should be contractually binding the correct judgment at the time?

Mr. Younger: The offset agreement is contractually binding. The Boeing company has undertaken under contract to provide 130 per cent. of the value of the AWACS deal in work for British firms that have to compete for that business. Boeing has every intention of fulfilling the undertaking, and has set up an office in London to ensure that it does.

Dr. Hampson: Is it not true that British companies, even on offset deals, must put forward competitively priced tenders? As we have seen the Ptarmigan problems, is my right hon. Friend convinced that British companies are not merely taking things for granted but are genuinely putting forward competitively priced efforts to win these offset deals? If they are not, there will be wide repercussions for our purchasing in this country.

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. I believe that British companies are well aware that that is what they must do. Many of them are doing so, and the more widely this can be publicised the better.

Mr. Duffy: Did we not receive similar contractual commitments in respect of Trident and star wars? How much work and how many jobs resulted from them? The right hon. Gentleman goes on expressing faith in Boeing, but I was in Seattle in January and I must tell him that although I cannot be as close to Boeing as he must be—necessarily—I was in the presence of one of his hon. Friends there. Neither of us received by any means the same assurances for which he is presumably prepared to settle. How many jobs have been created so far as a result of this offset, and how many does the Secretary of State expect?

Mr. Younger: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, those comparisons are not correct, because in neither the Trident programme nor the SDI programme is there an offset agreement. On the main previous occasion when Boeing had an offset agreement with Britain—involving the purchase of helicopters—it more than fulfilled its undertaking. That is what it intends to do this time.

Mr. Mans: Will my right hon. Friend state the total value of offset contracts for the AWACS programme so far placed in Britain?

Mr. Younger: The total that we have received from Boeing is a listing of contracts worth $141 million. We are still evaluating its report, but hope to make a fuller statement in the near future.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State knows very well that he told the House that, as an integral part of the Boeing deal, more than 4,000 jobs would be created as a result of offset agreements and that contracts worth £1·5 billion would be placed here. He now tells us that the total value of contracts is just over £100 million. [HON. MEMBERS: "No, dollars."] It was $141 million, so it is probably not much over £100 million. Is the Secretary of State not ashamed of that? The Under-Secretary of State said in reply to a question on 9 December:

> "Any breach of the agreement would therefore constitute a breach of the contract and . . . the Government would have recourse to English law in respect of any perceived damages. —[*Official Report*, 9 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *214*.]

When will the Secretary of State take measures to protect British jobs and ensure that we have our side of the agreement?

Mr. Younger: I honestly think that, in the accepted language of these days, this is much ado about nothing. The agreement is exactly the same as it originally was. In other words, 130 per cent. of the value of the AWACS contract has been undertaken to be provided in offset agreements. That is how it is expressed and that is how it will be carried out. The figures that I have quoted cover the first six months. As the whole period lasts for eight years, and as Boeing is contractually committed to giving us the work, there is no reason to think that the agreement is not proceeding extremely satisfactorily and will not be fully met.

Mr. Favell: Jobs would flow if the surplus Nimrod airborne early warning airframes were adapted to other uses. Is my right hon. Friend able to say what has happened?

Mr. Younger: We are examining what other uses can be found for the surplus Nimrod airframes, but we are not yet able to make a statement.

Military Land Act 1892

6. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the implications of the Military Land Act 1892 for rights of passage on common land at or near defence establishments.

14. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the implications of the Military Land Act 1892 for rights of passage on common land at or near defence establishments.

Mr. Freeman: In the past 10 years, when making new military byelaws under the Military Land Act 1892, the Secretary of State has received four representations that the proposed byelaws could prejudice rights of way on common land and 11 representations that they would prejudice rights of common.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not the case that, during those years, the Government have broken the law and encouraged the arrest—and imprisonment in some cases—of several thousand people at Greenham Common and on Salisbury Plain? If the Conservative party is to masquerade as the party of law and order, why do the Government not do the decent thing and acknowledge that fact in the courts? Moreover, perhaps the Minister could ask the Secretary of State for Defence to resign in view of this carry-on.

Mr. Freeman: I have no intention of asking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to resign. The hon. Gentleman is probably referring to the decision of the Reading Crown court about byelaws at Greenham Common. That decision, which the Crown Prosecution Service has appealed against, has nothing whatever to do with rights of way. It is to do with the rights of specific commoners. Byelaws affecting Greenham Common were introduced in 1985 for the proper reason of protecting the integrity of the base.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not clear that before 1979 the Military Land Act 1892—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] That is right. Unlike Conservative Members, I can read. Is it not quite clear that since the Government came into office they have been concerned only with stopping democratic protests by ordinary people, including the women of Greenham Common? Would it not be wise for the Government to do the sensible thing—wind up that base, get rid of it and give back the land as common land for ordinary people?

Mr. Freeman: We have not been stopping the rights of individuals to protest democratically. The 300 byelaws, in particular those at Greenham common, prevent illegal trespass on to the base. In no way do they stop the right of democratic protest. Hon. Members who encourage people to enter the base do so on their own responsibility. Those who enter the base at Greenham Common will be apprehended and removed.

Montebello Agreement

7. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying new dual capable aircraft under the Montebello decision.

10. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying new dual capable aircraft under the Montebello decision.

Mr. Younger: As I said earlier, the agreement by NATO Defence Ministers at Montebello in 1983 did not include specific decisions on such matters.

The modernisation of NATO's dual-capable aircraft is a continuous process, the need for which was confirmed in the papers submitted to Ministers at Montebello and in SACEUR's subsequent proposals for the implementation of the Montebello decision.

Mr. Wareing: The Secretary of State will be aware that I had correspondence with the Prime Minister and with Lord Trefgarne during the period leading up to the last general election. I was told constantly that no specific proposals had been made at Montebello and that the Government could not speculate on a situation that may not even arise. On a visit to the United States I was informed by people at the Pentagon that the decision was taken at Montebello. The hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) was informed in a written answer on 21 March that a decision was taken at Montebello. Therefore, is not the Secretary of State being dual-capable with the truth? Does he not realise that a Gallup poll published today shows that 65 per cent. of the British people are in favour of negotiating and only 21 per cent. are in favour of modernisation?

Mr. Younger: I should have thought that virtually 100 per cent. of the British people were in favour of negotiations, which the Government are pursuing successfully. It remains the case that no specific proposals were put forward at Montebello. Only general requirements were put forward. We await specific proposals, and when they arrive we shall have to consider them.

Mr. McTaggart: Does the Secretary of State agree that there is already a substantial imbalance in the number of aircraft in NATO's favour? Does it not make sense to correct that imbalance by including them in the conventional arms talks and the parallel talks to be set against Warsaw pact imbalances?

Mr. Younger: I do not agree with that at all. In fact, the Soviet Union is rapidly building up its dual capable aircraft. We would be foolish to stop doing the same and not to keep them up to date.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) must not carry on conversations across the Chamber.

Mr. Walker: Most people have never flown aeroplanes. They know nothing about them and ought not to be listened to.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Royal Air Force should have its weapon systems modernised because RAF pilots and aircraft need to survive modern battlefield conditions? If they are to attack enemy bases, they have to be capable of penetrating very sophiscated Soviet air defences and therefore need to have stand-off capabilities.

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Opposition's doctrine seems to be that we should have out-of-date and ineffective weapons. I can see no argument for that.

Miss Widdecombe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in view of the success of both the negotiations to which he referred in earlier answers and the INF treaty, it is imperative that we modernise our shorter-range weapons to guarantee flexible response, which is central to NATO policy?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. If proof were needed, the experience of the last three years shows conclusively that, provided we keep our weapons systems up to date and negotiate with the super-powers for reductions in armaments, we can brillantly succeed in doing that. And that is what has happened.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Secretary of State now answer the question? He says that he is 100 per cent. in favour of modernisation and negotiation. If he wants to modernise, why not negotiate at the same time? If the dual-track arrangement was so successful, why not try it

again for battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons? Since the Soviet Union has a superiority, why not modernise and negotiate at the same time?

Mr. Younger: Simply because the priorities in the continued negotiations for reductions in weapons, to which we are committed, are to reduce the strategic systems, to have a worldwide ban on chemical weapons and to tackle the conventional imbalance. Those are the main priorities that threaten our security and the best ones for which we should try to achieve reductions.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is this not a totally spurious issue? Did not the Labour party, in the bad old days when it was in office, have a consistent record of introducing new, dual-capable aircraft into service, such as the Canberra, the Jaguar and the Tornado?

Mr. Younger: Yes, my hon. Friend is perfectly correct. I understand that the Tornado was devised originally by a Labour Government. It is a pity that the present Labour Opposition do not have such a responsible attitude as their predecessors.

Trident Submarine

8. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the increase in the cost of the pressurised water reactor for the Trident submarine; and what are the implications for the total cost of the Trident project.

13. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the increase in the cost of the pressurised water reactor for the Trident submarine; and what are the implications for the total cost of the Trident project.

Mr. Younger: There has been no increase for some time in the estimate of cost for the pressurised water reactor for Vanguard class submarines and none is expected.

Mr. Madden: Is not the Secretary of State not concerned about the widespread suspicion that the Government are concealing the true cost of Trident and that many believe that its true cost is now running at more than £11,000 million, which represents £30,000 a day over the next 1,000 years? Does the Secretary of State not recognise that many of my constituents, who face big cuts in National Health Service facilities, would much prefer to see taxpayers' money put into the National Health Service to rebuild it rather than that this enormous amount of money should be spent on Trident? If Trident is so popular and so important, why do the Government not establish a national lottery to pay for it and scrap the one that they are planning for the National Health Service?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure where the hon. Gentleman gets his facts from. We have substantially reduced the cost of the Trident programme. In particular, there has been a reduction of no less than £376 million—a real reduction —according to the most recent calculations. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman and his constituents would be very pleased about that. Expenditure on the National Health Service is very much greater than that on defence, and that is probably quite right, but the presence of nuclear weapons, if they maintain our security, is an essential prerequisite for the National Health Service to operate at all.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Government's prime duty is the defence of the realm and that at a time of less obvious threat the Government must never let weakness be the cause of war? Will he therefore confirm his commitment to Trident—that it is a form of insurance, and almost cheap at the price?

Mr. Younger: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's assessment of the position. It is worth noticing that this Government's extremely successful economic record is enabling us both to afford adequate defence and to give increased funds to the National Health Service.

Mr. Home Robertson: If the Secretary of State wants information on the costing of submarine systems, I suggest that one of the best places to look is on the beach at Helensburgh, near the Clyde submarine base. Has he made any representations to the United States military authorities about that subject, or has he received any representations from them?

Mr. Younger: I have had no complaints of that sort, but the Trident programme is creating a very large number of jobs in the Dunbartonshire area, and I am sure that very many people and their families appreciate that fact.

Defence Contracts

9. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on new measures taken by the procurement executive of his Department following publication of the report, "Learning from Experience" concerning overspending on defence contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: The report "Learning from Experience" acknowledged the many improvements that have been made in procurement procedures in recent years and highlighted the importance of adherence to these procedures. With regard to new measures, a key recommendation—that the chief of defence procurement should extend his central scrutiny of projects to include technical issues—has already been implemented. Implementation of other measures is under way.

Mr. Latham: After the quite abysmal waste of public money revealed by that report and other reports from the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence, is it not absolutely essential that Mr. Levene should be given the power to hire and fire the best commercial brains in order to bring these costs under control?

Mr. Sainsbury: I can tell my hon. Friend that although the PAC looks at projects that have caused problems, not all the stories are of failure. There is an increasing number of success stories as a result of the new procedures that we have implemented and of Mr. Levene's work. Three recent examples are 3D radar—long-range air defence—new bridging for the 1990s, and a submarine electronic surveillance system. Those are all recent contracts with an aggregate value of more than £400 million; a saving against the expected budget price of more than £100 million.

Mr. Cartwright: Is it not the case that on a number of occasions the Ministry of Defence has been required to reduce the standard of its specification for a weapons

system to meet what the contractor could actually provide? What extra steps are being taken to strengthen the ability of his Department to test the claims of a contractor before a contract is placed?

Mr. Sainsbury: As the report brought out, in arriving at a satisfactory production contract it is important to observe the correct procedures in determining what can be achieved and to ensure that there is a precise specification. One of the lessons of "Learning from Experience" is the importance of adhering to those procedures. On a number of occasions when things have gone wrong it was because production was entered into before capability had been accurately determined. That was the main cause of the problem.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My hon. Friend has given an excellent reply in terms of ensuring that the procurement executive is close to development. Does that mean that the thought of moving the sea systems controllerate away from the research establishments is now further from his mind?

Mr. Sainsbury: As my hon. Friend is aware, we are examining the implications and any advantages that might arise from the co-location of those parts of the sea systems controllerate that are presently at three or four different locations. No recommendation has been made to Ministers at this stage.

Mr. Sean Hughes: Why has it taken the Government nine years and four Secretaries of State to wake up to what has been called by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) an "abysmal waste"? Would a fraction of that waste have been tolerated in other aspects of public service, still less in a grocery chain?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will understand that if a contract has been entered into after perhaps rushing the procedures, or without competition, it takes some time to get it back on the rails. Most of the contracts giving rise to the kinds of problems to which my hon. Friend referred earlier are those which were entered into by the last Labour Government.

Cadet Organisations

11. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial resources are devoted by his Department towards the running of cadet organisations.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence devotes approximately £33 million towards the cost of running the four cadet organisations; the Army Cadet Force, the Combined Cadet Force, the Air Training Corps and the Sea Cadet Corps—which total approximately 140,000 cadets. That sum covers the cost of accommodation, staffing, travel, administration and training.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cadet forces he mentioned are most important to this country, not only as youth organisations, but as the future basis for recruitment into the services? Can he assure me that the Air Training Corps will have sufficient resources in the coming year to give as much gliding practice as possible?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend about the value of the training corps for recruitment, to say nothing of the social benefits to the country of the cadet organisations. One third of all officers in the regular forces have served with the cadet organisations. As for the Air Training Corps, I can give my hon. Friend the assurance he seeks on both gliding and travel arrangements.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it true that the Minister's Department is currently examining a form of national service?

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cadet forces give young people unrivalled opportunities for comradeship, discipline, adventure and training in leadership? Can he say how many girls or young ladies, as well as boys and young men, benefit from those opportunities?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend about the sense of adventure and self-reliance, and the training for playing a useful part in society, that are provided in the cadet forces. About one third of the members of the Air Training Corps are girls.

Frigates and Destroyers

12. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of frigates and destroyers currently operationally available to fulfil the United Kingdom's commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are currently 49 destroyers and frigates in service with the Fleet, of which 42 are available for operational deployment immediately or within a short period. A number of these ships are at present outside the NATO area, but could be recalled in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Douglas: Would the Minister care to inform the House whether he includes in those 42 the ships now deployed in the Armilla patrol? In view of their sparse numbers, will he give some indicaton of when the Government will order the next batch of type 23s? It is important to shipbuilding yards in the Clyde and elsewhere that those orders are placed.

Mr. Stewart: The Government appreciate the importance of the orders that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. He will know that we have received tenders for up to four new type 23s, which are currently being evaluated. An announcement will be made at the proper time.

Certainly the figure for destroyers and frigates includes those in the Armilla patrol. They do a first-class job for the country, and I am proud that they should be included in the Fleet. However, the suggestion that that makes it impossible for our destroyers and frigates to carry out the remainder of their task is wrong. The Royal Navy has the largest fleet of destroyers and frigates of any European country in NATO, and our ships carry out all our NATO obligations in full.

Mr. Kilfedder: What would be the effect on the defence capabilities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation if the ports of Northern Ireland were no longer available to NATO's vessels?

Mr. Stewart: The effectiveness of the defence of Western Europe depends on the availability of as many

ports and bases as possible. I would not want to think that the proposition that the hon. Gentleman has put forward needs be taken into account in practice.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the Minister aware that the chaos in procurement, which is resulting in the beggaring of many of the yards that should be providing type 23 frigates and others, is evidence of the total disarray in which the Government's naval planning now rests, because of the burden that has to be carried by the rest of the Fleet to finance the Trident project?

Mr. Stewart: No, Sir. I absolutely disagree. We already have as many as eight destroyers and frigates under construction, and we expect to continue ordering to maintain the figure of around 50 frigates in our Fleet. I dispute what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Service Women

15. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what greater roles he expects women to play in the services in the light of the declining pool of available young men eligible to join up.

Mr. Freeman: It has been the policy of successive Governments that women in the armed forces should not be employed in direct combat roles. However, women are being increasingly employed in technical roles, as well as in support and administrative areas where they have traditionally been employed. We intend to expand these opportunities wherever practicable.

Mr. Mans: I welcome my hon. Friend's reply. Will he give further consideration to allowing women to train as pilots?

Mr. Freeman: No, Sir. We have no plans to use women in combat, at least in the military sense.

Frigates

16. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of current contracts to build frigates; and how many jobs are involved.

Mr. Sainsbury: Four type 22 and four type 23 frigates are currently in various stages of construction. Precise costs are commercially confidential, but the total value of those orders is in excess of £1 billion. Each frigate directly employees about 1,200 men in the shipyard over its three to four-year build programme. In addition, at least twice that number will be employed elsewhere over the same period producing the weapons and equipment to be fitted in the ship.

Mr. Patchett: Will the Minister tell the House how many jobs will be lost in Swan Hunter, Yarrow and Cammell Laird if he refuses to order in full in this financial year the four frigates that are desperately required by the Navy, and has he decided which yards will close if he does so?

Mr. Sainsbury: We are currently awaiting the best and final offers to the invitations to tender which we issued earlier and to which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces referred in a recent answer. Clearly, we shall want to place the orders in the light of those tenders to give the Navy the best possible value for money.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the President of Zimbabwe. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Mr. Carrington: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how delighted the nurses are at the recent pay award? Does she agree with the nurses at the Charing Cross hospital who were telling me at the weekend that they thought it would go a long way towards improving recruitment and that nurses' morale was greatly improved as a result of the Government's decision to implement the award in full?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I agree with my hon. Friend. The award in full to nurses, doctors, dentists and professions allied to medicine has been widely welcomed. It means that we shall be able to recruit more nurses in areas where there were shortages, such as paediatric nursing and intensive care units, and that nurses will be getting about 44 per cent. in real terms above what they were getting in 1979, and doctors about 30 per cent. extra in real terms. It is a good award for those who work in the Health Service, and it is good for the patients.

Mr. Kinnock: Two weeks ago I asked the Prime Minister whether she would amend the social security regulations to restore housing benefit and help with rates. She then replied, "No, Sir." Today, I ask her the same question. Does she give the same answer?

The Prime Minister: We are spending far more on housing benefit now that ever was the case during the life of the previous Labour Government. We have reformed the fundamental structure. The fundamental reform was correct.

Mr. Kinnock: Why is the Prime Minister unable to answer the question? She knows that she has been wrong. She knows that she has done wrong. Why does she stand on her dignity instead of doing what she can to help others to maintain their dignity? We know that she must make changes. Why does she not just get on with it and not unnecessarily prolong the anxiety and the hardship which hundreds of thousands of people in Britain are now suffering? The two weeks since I asked her that question might be a short time in politics, but it has already been a long time for those in poverty and in worry.

The Prime Minister: We do not stand on dignity. We in fact provide more resources—more cash—because the economy run by this Government has enabled us to provide more resources for housing benefit, social security reform and the Health Service. If we went back to the previous Labour Government we would have to cut the social services, housing benefit, the Health Service and nurses' and doctors' pay. I am sure that not even the right hon. Gentleman would want that.

Mr. Kinnock: May I ask the Prime Minister for a straight answer? Will she now amend the housing benefit

social security regulations? I ask her on behalf of people in every constituency, on behalf of her hon. Friends and on behalf of the whole humane instinct of the people of this country.

The Prime Minister: The system was badly in need of reform. The substantial structure will, of course, stay.

Mr. Brittan: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity today to make it clear that it is totally unacceptable for picketing to turn into blockade and that those who want to go to work have the right to do so and will be fully protected from violence and intimidation?

The Prime Minister: The only right to picket is a right to peaceful picketing. Any violence is a criminal matter and people who resort to it must expect to be dealt with accordingly by the prosecuting authorities and by the courts. It is a sad day when trade unionism has come to the amount of violence which we sometimes see on picket lines.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister confirm—Mr. Speaker not having certified the Local Government Finance Bill as a money Bill—that it would be entirely within their Lordships' constitutional right to seek to amend and improve the operation of the poll tax as contained in the Bill? Will she further accept that the more the poll tax is understood by the public, as well as by parliamentarians, the more unacceptable it has become? Their Lordships would be performing a public service by sending the whole thing back here for reconsideration.

The Prime Minister: The matter of the constitution is not only for me; it is for their Lordships' House and for Mr. Speaker. It is for them to decide, and they have rules which must govern the decisions. It is not a matter for me.

With regard to the community charge, I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman. The more that is generally understood about it, the fairer it is seen to be. It is far fairer than the system of rates and rating revaluation, particularly on capital values, to which the right hon. Gentleman seems to want to cling.

Mr. Hal Miller: Now that the Local Government Finance Bill—the flagship of our programme—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Miller: —has navigated safely through this House, will my right hon. Friend look again at the arguments for the central financing of education, now that we have a national curriculum, national tests, and are funding centrally schools that opt out of the system?

The Prime Minister: I think that that would mean wholly central control of education. There is no way in which a Department of Education and Science could administer the education system. The laws were set in the 1944 Education Act—and have been amended since—within which local authorities have to pursue their duties. Having been a Secretary of State for Education and Science, I do not think that the Department of Education and Science could ever run education centrally; nor do I think that it would be desirable that it should do so.

Q2. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Prime Minister advise me on how I can assist one of my constituents, a lady who has an income of £76 a week, and who has, as a result of these changes, lost £11 per week in housing benefit? How can she continue to feel that she is part of the enterprise society when she is far worse off working three days a week as a shop assistant than she would be if she stayed at home? When the Prime Minister eventually administers the Admiral Byng treatment to the Secretary of State for Social Services, will she consider administering similar treatment to the Secretary of State for Employment, as he has been the architect of the mess in which the Government find themselves?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, it is not possible for me to deal with individual cases. Whenever I have tried to do so, I have found that when we look into them there are substantial factors which have not been fully put into the question. I remind the hon. Gentleman that if we went back to the amount spent on housing benefit in 1979 it would mean cutting the total spent by 52 per cent.

Mr. Stokes: Did my right hon. Friend read the remarkable speech which our right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) made recently, in which he praised the part which the so-called working classes now play in supporting the Government? We all agree with that. However, for the avoidance of doubt, will she confirm that there is still room in the Government and in the Conservative party for the nobility, the gentry and the middle classes?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House wants to hear this reply.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is just about the only person who could ask that question in this House, and I wish to goodness that we had more like him.

Q3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Prime Minister consider the case of Mrs. Niner, a lollipop lady in my constituency, who lives with her husband, young daughter and two teenage sons in a two-bedroomed maisonette? Over and above the existing rates level, they will be faced with an extra poll tax bill of £1,138 per year. Can that be stopped, or will the Government's poll tax juggernaut run down my lollipop lady?

The Prime Minister: If they are faced with a poll tax —a community charge—of that dimension, it must be because they have a very extravagant local authority. That is partly the trouble. Many Left-wing Labour authorities have put up the rent and rates, saying that the taxpayer can afford to pay for them, but the fact is—perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell his lollipop lady and many others—that under this Government the amount spent on social security, in particular on health and pensions, has vastly increased beyond anything that could have been contemplated eight years ago.

Mr. Mates: At a time when many people are working hard to repair and improve Anglo-Irish relations, was it not unhelpful, to say the least, for the Irish Prime Minister to make such a savage attack on the British Government's policies last weekend? In particular, was it not irresponsible of him to advocate a unitary state in Ireland, when his own country's Government so recently put their names to a document forswearing that until such time as the majority of people of Northern Ireland want that to happen?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. The highest priority must be the defeat of terrorism, which could be a threat south of the border, as it is in the north. The defeat of terrorism requires unstinting effort and effective co-operation across the border. We shall continue to press for that and to seek reassurance from the Irish Government that the speech to which my hon. Friend referred does not mean that they are backing away from their responsibilities under the agreement.

Q4. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: I wanted to ask the Prime Minister why the Government Whip objected to the Second Reading of my Grandparents (Adoption of Children) Bill last Friday. However, as she was not prepared to reply to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, does that mean that the Leader of the Opposition and Opposition Members must continually badger the Government so that they realise that changes are needed in the proposals for social security? As the Prime Minister refused to answer the Leader of the Opposition, will she answer my straightforward question? Is the Prime Minister going to make any changes to housing benefit in the new proposals for social security?

The Prime Minister: I will answer the hon. Gentleman as I answered the Leader of the Opposition. This year about £46 billion is being spent on social security—a sum vastly in excess of anything contemplated seven or eight years ago. There are more pensioners, the eligibility for people who are disabled has been increased and we are concentrating more money on families, especially on low income families. It was time that we had a fundamental reform, and it was the right reform.

Q5. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: During my right hon. Friend's most welcome visit last Friday to the thriving city of Nottingham, where many of my constituents work, did she notice two key characteristics: first, that last May the administration was taken over by a Conservative council for the first time; and, secondly, that the initiative to restore and rejuvenate those parts of Nottingham which require it are being led by a private sector initiative?

The Prime Minister: I had a good visit to Nottingham. I saw those now responsible for the sound administration and careful finances of the city, which was flourishing. I saw excellent industries, some of which did not exist some years ago and which had taken over where there had been a dying industry and were providing new jobs, which is good. I saw excellent industries, an excellent administration and excellent arts and sports facilities.

Central Ordnance Depot, Donnington (Fire)

3.30 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the central ordnance depot fire in Donnington.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): The central ordnance depot at Donnington, near Telford in Shropshire, is one of the Army's two major storage depots. It has an area of over 300 acres with about 270,000 sq m of covered storage. There are nine major storage buildings on the site, with one under construction. The depot has a mixed military-civilian work force.

Yesterday, at about 11.30 hours, a small, smouldering fire was discovered in building B1, one of the six larger buildings on the site. The building was evacuated and the fire extinguished. The Ministry of Defence police were called to investigate and after a full inspection of the building the work force was readmitted at 13.30 hours. At 15.30 hours, while MOD police were still present taking statements, a second fire started in the upper part of a corner of the building, and quickly took hold. This second fire occurred on the opposite side of the building to the first.

The Army fire brigade attended, followed immediately by the local authority brigades. A maximum of 21 fire appliances were in attendance. Most of the building was destroyed. The fire is now under control and is being damped down. One fireman was slightly injured. There were no other casualties.

There was some asbestos element in the smoke because of the asbestos content of the roofing material. This was dispersed some five miles to the west of the fire. Wrekin district council staff are dealing with this, and I am advised that the danger to the public is slight.

The West Mercia police, assisted by the Ministry of Defence police, are carrying out their normal inquiries into the circumstances of the fire. The Army authorities will also be convening a board of inquiry to examine the cause of the fire and to consider what action needs to be taken. The board will include an outside expert from Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services.

I should like to apologise through you, Mr. Speaker, to those members of the public living in the vicinity of the depot for the inconvenience and disturbance caused by this unfortunate event.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister join me in again thanking all those involved in the emergency services for their tremendous efforts and the staff of Wrekin district council who responded so rapidly to deal with the consequences of the fire? Does he agree that for a fire of this magnitude to happen once in a constituency, as it did in my constituency in 1983, is disastrous; for it to happen twice in five years is without precedent and unbelievable?

Is the Minister aware that this fire is of massive concern, not only to my constituents who work in the Ministry of Defence buildings, but to everyone living in the surrounding area? Will he tell the House what reassurance, in addition to what he has said already, he can give my constituents about their safety? In particular, will he say what dangers are associated with the dust and debris which have spread over much of the northern part of Telford?

Will the Minister confirm that many of the safety recommendations made by the Ministry of Defence inquiry following the first fire, particularly regarding the construction of fire barriers in the buildings, have not been carried out? Is he aware that many people will find totally unacceptable the excuse given by one of his officials that the reason why the safety measures were not carried out was

"because there have been factors against us such as time and money."

Will the Minister announce that there will be a full independent public inquiry into the fire? An internal Ministry of Defence inquiry would be totally unacceptable to this House and certainly to my constituents. Will he see that the inquiry addresses the following questions?

First, why was the remedial work not carried out in full following the first fire? Secondly, what was the cause of the fire and, in particular, were the same factors at work as was the case with the previous fire? Thirdly, what are the hazards from asbestos in the buildings, not only for the people who work in them but for people living in the area? The Minister will be aware that this issue has been of active concern to trade unions at the depot for many years. Fourthly, what remedial work is necessary, particularly in relation to removal of asbestos and to making the depot safe?

Will the Minister undertake to implement immediately and in full any safety recommendations that are made by the inquiry? Will he also ensure that full compensation is paid to anyone suffering direct or indirect consequences of the fire? Will he see that the local authorities, especially the Wrekin district council, which have responded so magnificently to this fire, are fully funded for the costs involved?

Any hon. Member would feel profoundly concerned if a fire of this magnitude occurred once in a lifetime in his constituency. In my constituency, it has happened twice in five years. My constituents are entitled not just to answers from the Minister but to action—and they are entitled to it now.

Mr. Freeman: I thank the hon. Member for what he said, and I join him wholeheartedly in congratulating and thanking the local authorities, the fire service and the police service. He was right to say what he did.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about safety and danger to the public. That is primarily a matter for the Wrekin district council, but I understand that it will be calling a press conference at 4 o'clock. I am advised indirectly from the Health and Safety Executive, by a senior factory inspector, that there is no significant danger to the public. The advice that The Wrekin district council will offer to local residents clearly should be heeded.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the 1983 report. That report made 12 recommendations, all of which were agreed. It might be for the convenience of the House if I gave to the hon. Gentleman, and placed in the Library of the House this afternoon, a summary of that inquiry, which was given to trades unions at the time. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and others might find it helpful to read the report.

The hon. Gentleman has asked for an independent public inquiry. We shall follow the procedures followed by

all Governments in setting up a military inquiry. It will incude independent experts. I have already said that a member of Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services will serve on that inquiry. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that when the inquiry has reached its conclusions they will be communicated promptly, fairly and accurately, not only to the hon. Gentleman and to the House but to all those who are concerned and affected.

I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance about claims. The claims of those who have been adversely affected and can show that their financial losses are directly due to this unfortunate incident will be considered.

The hon. Gentleman asked the board of inquiry to consider a number of points. I have noted very carefully what he said and I undertake to draw them to the attention of the military board of inquiry.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I join the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) and my hon. Friend the Minister in congratulating the local authority, the police and the fire services on the way they reacted to this disaster. Will the Army board of inquiry be able to consider whether there is any indication whatsoever that arson may have been the cause of this disaster, and will any findings on that point be made available to the public?

Mr. Freeman: I can give my right hon. Friend that assurance. We have certainly not ruled out arson as the cause of this latest fire. I have told the House that there were two separate incidents in yesterday's fire. Certainly the investigations of the West Mercia police in addition to those of the Ministry of Defence police will concentrate on the point mentioned by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I join right hon. and hon. Members in paying tribute to the emergency services and the local authority. The Minister said that he would, helpfully, put a summary of the findings of the previous enquiry in the Library, but he avoided a question which the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) asked: what recommendations of that inquiry have not been implemented, and why not?

Mr. Freeman: All the recommendations of that inquiry were accepted in full.

Mr. Wallace: Were they implemented?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman should perhaps read the summary, which I will place in the Library this afternoon, and he will find that the report makes certain recommendations. Clearly the measures needed in the short term, such as dualling the location of certain strategic army stocks, have been implemented. The reason why the fire at Donnington yesterday has not affected the operational readiness of the Army is that the strategic items were located in two separate places. Also, the water supply system at Donnington was improved immediately following the report.

A start was made immediately on the longer-term measures, and if the hon. Gentleman cares to visit Donnington he will find that, as the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) will know, the building destroyed in the 1983 fire has been replaced by a modern building in which the stocks are compartmentalised. The other buildings will take time to replace. It is interesting to note that the building where the fire occurred yesterday was the next building shortly to be cleared of all stock and modernised.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Is my hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents in Shrewsbury and Atcham work at the central ordnance depot at Donnington? Is it not the case that relations between the garrison and the local authority and the fire and police services are excellent? I join the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) in paying tribute particularly to the fire service for its very quick response.

The House should appreciate that many thousands of crucial jobs are involved in this depot, which is very important for the economy of Shropshire. In particular, the Minister's assurance this afternoon on the subject of asbestos is very welcome. It will help to calm the people, particularly to the west of Donnington, in my constituency who may feel threatened as a result of the fire.

Mr. Freeman: I thank my hon. Friend. Some 1,800 civilians are employed at Donnington, and some 400 military personnel, so it is a sizeable and important NATO logistics base. I join him in paying tribute to the work force. As I said to the hon. Member for The Wrekin, the constituency involved, we will communicate fully to the trade unions the results of this inquiry and discuss with them the recommendations that it makes.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister accept that many people in The Wrekin and other areas are concerned that he does not seem keen on having a public inquiry into this disaster? Will he reflect again on the need for a public inquiry that will include consideration of the reports made in the past and the need to remove all asbestos from the Donnington depot, which has been a source of concern for many years?

Secondly, will the Minister consider the need for long-term health checks throughout the Telford area and that part of Shropshire where asbestos leaked out in 1983 and again this week for health damage that may be caused to people because of the asbestos that has landed in their gardens and on their homes and farmland in the district?

Mr. Freeman: I have said that we shall follow the normal procedures and shall not be holding a public inquiry. We shall be holding the normal military inquiry. With regard to communicating the substance of the inquiry and the recommendations to the House, I have said that we will make sure that the results are properly, fairly and promptly communicated.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the removal of asbestos. I have said that the building that was destroyed was the next in line to be modernised and the asbestos removed. The building that replaces the building that was destroyed in 1983 is a fine modern building in which the stock is compartmentalised, and it does not have asbestos in the roof. I can confirm that if members of the public are concerned about their health as a result of this incident they should contact the military authorities, and, if necessary, we will arrange for the necessary health checks.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I thank my hon. Friend for coming to the House and answering this private notice question on this very important issue, in stark contrast to the absence of statements in the House

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

after the fire in June 1983. May I ask my hon. Friend to read the correspondence between my constituent, Commander J. R. S. Engledue RN, Retired, me and his Department between 1983 and 1985 on the subject of the £174 million of uninsured loss following the last fire?

Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence made scant comment about the previous fire which resulted in a vast loss to the taxpayer? Therefore, will he continue his admirable example of today and keep the House fully informed at each stage?

Mr. Freeman: I assure my hon. Friend that I will read the correspondence between himself, his constituent and the Ministry of Defence. Preliminary indications are that the loss of stock is relatively modest in comparison with the disaster of 1983.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Minister will understand that there was concern along the Welsh border and in mid-Wales about the incident in view of the prevailing winds. We are relieved to know that the damage was limited. Although it was limited, clearly the Minister needs to consider the other storage areas which may be similarly constructed. Can he tell the House how many storage facilities are of an age which may mean that they still contain asbestos covering, and how he is dealing with those?

Mr. Freeman: The report of 1983, of which I have said that I will place a summary in the Library, covered all ordnance depots of the British Army. Therefore, it related not just to Donnington but to the others, including Bicester. We were not dealing just with the problems of Donnington but were concerned about the Armywide implications.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): It gives me no great pleasure to say to the hon. Gentleman that he has not been as frank with the House as he should have been. He has said that he will place in the Library the recommendations of the internal board of inquiry following the last fire. He has said that they relate to other depots and departments. How many of the recommendations have been carried out, and how many have not been carried out? Surely he can tell the House, in view of the second fire, what recommendations have not been carried out.

May I press the hon. Gentleman on the question of a public inquiry? He said that the normal practice was to have an internal inquiry. We understand that. But this was not a normal fire. It was a fire which apparently will cost the Ministry of Defence a lot of money. Will he reconsider having a public inquiry in view of the fact that not only the Ministry of Defence and its employees are involved, but people living in the area, other services and the district council? Surely there is a case for a public inquiry.

Mr. Freeman: The right hon. Gentleman has made two key points. I rebut his charge that I have not been frank with the House. As I have already said, 12 recommendations were made. I have only just received the report on yesterday's incident. I have said that I will place a copy of it in the Library. When the right hon. Gentleman has a chance to read it, he will see that all the recommendations were accepted because of the nature—[HON. MEMBERS: "They have not been implemented."] If hon. Gentlemen would allow me to complete what I was saying, they would hear that there were specific recommendations about modernisation or rebuilding. I have intimated that we cannot wave a magic wand to replace buildings of the size and scale of those at Donnington. It takes years to do that. We started boldly at Donnington. If hon. Gentlemen have had a chance to visit Donnington, they will have seen the scale and expense of the rebuilding programme.

As regards a public inquiry, I have stated what our position is. I find unacceptable the implication of the right hon. Gentleman's comment that the Army has something to hide or that it does not wish to consult the various bodies which I am sure have much to offer, including the police, the fire service and a representative of Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate. I am convinced that this is the correct way to proceed.

I am sure that the hon. Member for the Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) will help allay the fears of his constituents because we are following the standard practice in military inquiries. I will co-operate with him to ensure that the trade unions at the site and his constituents are properly informed about the conclusions of the inquiry.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): If there is any evidence of contamination of agricultural areas on the Welsh border and in mid-Wales, bearing in mind the very unhappy experience following Chernobyl and the fact that the movement of animals on some farms is still restricted, will the Minister agree to meet representatives of the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales to consider such evidence and compensation arrangements?

Mr. Freeman: I can give the hon. and learned Gentleman that assurance. There is absolutely no evidence that the smoke from the fire has fallen other than within the immediate vicinity of the ordnance depot.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Weights and Measures (Knitting Yarns) Order 1988 be referred to Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Salmon (Weekly Close Time) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 390) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Armed Forces (Housing)

3.49 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision to facilitate the private housing of members of the armed forces during service and after retirement.

This Government have a good record on armed forces' pay. One of their first actions on taking office in 1979 was to implement in full the recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. Since then, they have continued to do that in full every successive year. Nevertheless, I believe that a grave injustice exists which does not result from any deliberate policy of this or any previous Government, but arises from the nature of service itself in our armed forces.

The first priority of most married couples today, and, indeed, of many single people, is to find themselves a house to buy. Yet, in the Army, fewer than one quarter of married personnel own their own homes.

In the Air Force, the figure is two fifths, as compared with a national average of two thirds. This causes intense worry to many service men. One can imagine the position of a man in his mid-forties—perhaps a sergeant major, a colonel or a squadron leader—who has given 25 years' service to the Crown and has not yet, as he comes out of the service, made that first step on to the lowest rung of the housing ladder, when people in equivalent professions would probably be on the second or third step.

The difficulty arises because, in the Army and the Royal Air Force, service men move from base to base. The problem does not arise in the third service. Home ownership in the Navy, thanks to an excellent scheme, is not a problem. The sailors move off in their ships leaving their families static. In a nutshell, the problem is that, if a soldier or airman chooses to buy a house and is then posted—as he assuredly will be, unless he is close to the end of his service—he has two unattractive options.

On the one hand, he can leave his family behind. If he does that, it is bad for the family and for the service. One can imagine, for example, the position of a regiment in Osnabrüch or Hamelin. If all the officers' wives were living in houses in England, who would look after the junior ranks' wives—girls in their late teens and early 20s—when their husbands were away for weeks on exercise?

The other option is for the service man to move to a quarter wherever the posting is. Unfortunately, unlike what happens in every other expatriate organisation that I know, including the Foreign Office and most private companies, if a service man is posted abroad, he has to pay rent for his house there. That rent is not tax relievable, but, if he owns a house in England and lets it, he has to pay tax on that rent, if he can find a tenant in the first place. Although there is shortage of rented accommodation at the bottom end of the sector, that is not always the case, as you, Mr. Speaker, may have noticed in the Sunday papers. There is a shortage of tenants in many areas of the rented market.

However, the problems facing the service man are not only financial. If he leaves behind a house and goes to another country, the problems with tenants can be phenomenal. Just this weekend, I heard that two of my closest friends in the armed forces had their house beaten up in the most outrageous fashion by tenants and much of the damage is not insurable.

That explains why home ownership in the Army and the Air Force is so low and why it is not in the interests of the service that it should be higher. My Bill puts forward two suggestions that could go some way towards closing the breach by assisting members of the armed forces eventually to own their own homes, without doing so during the bulk of their service.

The first is a change in the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970. That would enable insurance companies to offer endowment policies for service men with a view to their eventually buying houses, but on the basis that they would not be subject by law to the normal minimum period—in most cases seven years—before they could withdraw their money.

I suggest that service men should be allowed to borrow and put a capital sum into such a scheme—endowment policies are protected from taxation and grow tax-free—and be allowed to pay off the loans like a mortgage on a house, subject to the same tax relief that the rest of us enjoy on a house. That would not conceptually be a new tax relief. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stressed only last week the importance of the £30,000 tax relief to families. My proposal would bring to our soldiers and airmen the same tax relief that we enjoy, but instead it would apply to a nest egg which eventually, towards the end of service, the service men would use to pay part of the price of their houses. This could lead to a net saving to the Exchequer. It would, for example, stem the tremendous flow of Royal Air Force pilots—the cost of training is £3 million per pilot—who often cite housing as their principal reason for leaving early.

My other proposal is to do with the right-to-buy legislation. In December 1983, the Government passed a number of excellent measures which gave service men good rights to buy their council houses after a relatively short period, taking account of their time in the armed forces as well as the time that they had occupied their houses. Unfortunately, that legislation is applicable only if the service man has managed to obtain a council house.

I am afraid that some councils do not give service men fair parity. Thirty years ago, Duncan Sandys, Minister of Housing and Local Government and later Minister of Defence, said:

"That these men should be penalised in this way, solely by reason of the fact that they have been serving their country, is a most grievous injustice, which should not be allowed to continue."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1955; Vol. 537, c. 1887.]

Brent council's housing policy—this is one of many examples—is:

"servicemen who enlisted from the Borough who are discharged from the Forces will only be assisted if they fall within a 'priority group' . . . Those who qualify for consideration will face a very long wait."

I do not ask that service men be given special privileges; I ask that they be allowed to join council house waiting lists while they are serving, so by the end of their service most will have reached the point where they are entitled to a dwelling. As well as being justice for our soldiers, sailors and airmen, this would take the strain off those councils with service bases within their areas which ultimately find themselves assisting large numbers of service men who are forced to declare themselves homeless.

In summary, the Government have a good record on armed forces pay, but this one gaping hole exists. Our soldiers and airmen are there to defend us. We must give them similar opportunities to enjoy the same housing as

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

we do, but we must not do it by saying to them, "You should buy a house," in the full knowledge that it is not good for the forces for them to buy a house early in their service. My Bill will go a modest way in two respects towards filling this gap.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Julian Brazier, Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Jacques Arnold, Mr. David Davis, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Michael Irvine, Mr. David Shaw, Mr. Hugo Summerson, Mr. David Tredinnick and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

ARMED FORCES (HOUSING)

Mr. Julian Brazier accordingly presented a Bill to make provision to facilitate the private housing of members of the armed forces during service and after retirement: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 149.]

P and O (Dispute)

4 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order Mr. Speaker. In reply to a question from her right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) the Prime Minister referred to events taking place in Dover arising out of the P and O dispute. Has there been any sign from the Secretary of State for Transport or from the Secretary of State for Employment that there is likely to be a statement made tomorrow on that issue? If the matter is not resolved in an intelligent way, the lives of many people could be put at risk because they could be sailing on ships which are not properly manned and which are not subject to trade union agreement. That could lead to difficulties.

The Herald of Free Enterprise—a misnomer if ever there was one—sank because profit was put before the interests of people. Is it not clear that a statement should be made at the earliest opportunity because people's lives are at risk? It is time that we had a proper settlement of these matters through trade union machinery, rather than the imposition of employers' rights as against those of the workers.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no request for a statement to be made and have no knowledge of one. I am sure that what the hon. Gentleman has said will have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench who are responsible for these matters——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I am sure that what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has said will have been heard and perhaps we shall hear something tomorrow.

Mr. Skinner: My point of order has to do with the way in which you, Mr. Speaker, were able a few days ago to grant an emergency debate on the social security regulations. It is widely recognised that you did a pretty handsome job by allowing that debate and opening up an argument that needed opening up. I suggest, in view of what has already been said about what is occurring at Dover, that you might look kindly on the possibility of an application under Standing Order No. 20 on this issue to stop P and O using ferries without proper safety measures——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have received no application on that matter.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call the hon. Gentleman, but his point of order must be a different one.

Mr. Shaw: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If at any stage it was deemed appropriate for a Minister to make a statement, although safety is obviously of paramount importance to the company and the employees who have accepted the opportunity to work, I hope that such a statement will not be obfuscated by inaccuracies and false statements from Opposition Members. I hope that the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for

Employment, will, when making the statement, discuss the freedom and rights of the people and seamen of Dover to go to work in their own time and in their own way.

Mr. Speaker: This is not the time to debate this matter.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not now; I am on my feet.

Finance (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it concerned with this Bill?

Mr. Riddick: No, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Then I shall take it some other time.

4.3 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, that the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is the Government's 12th Finance Bill and it incorporates the proposals set out in my right hon. Friend's Budget last month. It was a substantial Budget and continues our strategy of tax reform and tax reduction within a framework of sound public finance, firm control of public expenditure and progressive reductions in public borrowing. Those policies have now brought us a balanced Budget.

In conjunction with other policies, this strategy has without doubt transformed the British economy. The extent of the change in performance and confidence is remarkable. In the 1960s, the British economy was clearly in a poor state. In the 1970s it worsened. We were known, with some justification, as the sick man of Europe. That label and all that went with it have now disappeared. In the 1980s the British economy has become the fastest-growing in Europe and, in 1987, the fastest-growing of all leading industrialised countries.

During the 1960s we praised and envied the German economic miracle. In the 1980s the position has been precisely reversed. The House need not necessarily take my word for that. I shall quote briefly from one of Germany's leading liberal newspapers, "Die Ziet":

> "In the past the German model was praised in an almost embarrassing manner and compared with Great Britain's bad example. Now it is the other way round".

That transformation has occurred because of the policies that we have followed and continue to follow in this Finance Bill, and each and every one of them has been consistently opposed by Opposition Members, who later today will vote against tax reductions, against fair treatment for married couples and against a raft of measures designed further to improve our economic prospects. Let no one believe that economic Luddites no longer exist, for they sit opposite us and will demonstrate that fact later today.

The evidence since the Budget confirms that Britain's economic success continues. The latest figures show that between February and March unemployment fell by 28,000. It has now fallen for 20 months in succession, by 706,000 in total and by 533,000 over the past year. It is now at its lowest level for more than six years.

It is equally relevant that the numbers of those in employment, apart from demographic changes, are continuing to rise strongly. In the fourth quarter of 1987, they rose by 146,000. That means an increase of more than half a million in 1987 as a whole. Over the past four years, the United Kingdom has created more jobs than the sum total of all the rest of the European Community added together. That is the scale of the change coming over our economy.

[Mr. John Major]

More evidence of the health of the economy was provided only this morning by the results of the CBI's latest industrial trends survey, carried out in the first half of this month. I shall illustrate some of its findings. It states:

"Business confidence remains high . . . The rising trend in optimism is broadly based . . . Strong demand has been met by increased manufacturing output . . . Investment intentions have strengthened substantially and 86 per cent. of firms report their capacity at least adequate to meet expected demand."

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Major: In a moment. That is the way in which British industry sees itself after the Budget, and it is a tragedy that the Opposition cannot see that——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Henderson *rose*——

Mr. Major: I promised to give way first to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson).

Mr. Henderson: I am glad that the Minister is giving way to the Opposition first. I am also glad that the Minister has itemised a number of areas in which he believes we are prosperous. If we are, how does he explain the fact that we have the second largest deficit in the balance of trade of any OECD country?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman should understand that one of the significant reasons for the balance of trade deficit is that the British economy is growing noticeably faster than those of any of our European competitors. If he examines the structure of the balance of trade deficit, he will notice that a good deal of it is semi-manufactured goods that are entering the country and will be re-exported.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that unemployment in Lancaster has fallen twice as fast as the regional and national drop? Does not the CBI survey to which he referred destroy the Opposition's pessimism, which says that every time people have more money in their pockets they will spend it on foreign goods?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend clearly illustrates the fact that prosperity is increasingly spreading to all regions of the United Kingdom and that unemployment is now falling in every region. I appreciate that the Opposition do not know how to achieve success, but it is a shame that they cannot even recognise it from time to time.

What is vital, and unusual for post-war recoveries in the United Kingdom, is that this continued improvement in the labour market and sustained growth in the economy has been achieved without a resurgence of inflation. Retail prices in the last three months are less than 3·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier, and 1987 was the first year since 1964 when the rate of growth exceeded the rate of inflation.

It is a welcome fact, moreover, that the economic resurgence is not confined to London and the south-east. The unemployment figures show that every region is sharing in the strength of the economy. That is reflected in the fact that the steepest falls in unemployment during the past year have been in the west midlands, the north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside. I hope that that is exceedingly welcome to the whole House.

Throughout the country, there is increasing evidence of improving performance and a spread of the enterprise culture. Between 1979 and the first half of 1987, manufacturing productivity in Scotland increased by an average of 5·5 per cent. a year as compared with overall growth in the United Kingdom of just under 4 per cent. Over the decade to 1986, output in high technology manufacturing in Scotland increased by 170 per cent. and in electronics by 210 per cent. In Wales, the number of self-employed people has gone up by nearly one third since 1981, and now stands at more than 14 per cent. of the working population—one of the highest proportions in the United Kingdom. Since 1983, employment has risen in every region of the United Kingdom.

There is a further factor—confidence in the United Kingdom is increasingly attracting overseas investment into this country. Since 1983, direct investment in the United Kingdom from abroad—leaving aside the North sea—has grown on average by 13·5 per cent. a year in real terms. By contrast, it fell between 1974 and 1979 when the Labour party was in office. This investment is benefiting every region. The Bill is designed specifically to encourage that process to continue.

Wales now has the greatest concentration of Japanese manufacturing units in Europe. Japanese car manufacturers are a valuable part of the economy in the north-east. The west midlands has picked up fast in the plastics industry and instrument engineering. In the north-west, old industries are adapting to new technology and new industries are being introduced.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): What has this to do with the Finance Bill?

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Gentleman clearly does not understand the interaction between financial measures in this Bill and others and the success of the economy.

The image of the parts of the country that I have mentioned, which is sedulously cultivated by Opposition Members as scandalously depressed, is gradually being changed. Business men and investors know better than the Opposition what is now happening in the regions.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): To what extent does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the British economy is dependent on the United States economy? What would be the impact on the British economy if, for example, there was a political change in the United States next year and the budget deficit and the trade deficit were cut during the next few years?

Mr. Major: The principal impact and concern regarding the British economy is the success of our economic management, our competitiveness and our practices. Those are the matters that are wholly within our control and they are the matters which have been dramatically improved during the past few years.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): The right hon. Gentleman did not include Yorkshire in his list of regions and successes. Would he care to comment on the fact that I can guarantee that most of the jobs advertised in the window of the Bramley jobcentre are part-time, low-paid

jobs? Is that not the reality of the increase in employment? It is not the increase in full-time, permanent work which the right hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Major: As it happens, I did mention Yorkshire, several parts of which are growing exceedingly rapidly. There is growth in part-time jobs, for which there is genuine demand. Many people welcome that growth. I do, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman does. There is also substantial growth in full-time jobs which is reflected in all the available statistics.

The confidence that we can now see is the direct result of our economic management over the past nine years. The attractiveness of the United Kingdom as a place to invest was given an enormous boost by the changes that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made to corporation tax in 1984, which gave the United Kingdom what is still one of the lowest corporation tax rates in the industrial world. This Budget gives a further boost to businesses that are already here and it will make the United Kingdom yet more attractive to businesses that are still thinking of coming here.

Again, the House need not just take my word for it. ICI called it the most radical Budget since the war. The CBI said:

"This is the Budget we have been waiting for . . . it will promote enterprise . . . it will provide greater incentives for all in British business."

The Association of British Chambers of Commerce said:

"We wanted incentives. We have got them. Now let us make them work".

The Small Business Bureau's description was:

"A shot in the arm for the smaller business".

The message is crucially and critically clear—the Budget provides a challenge which British business men are ready to grasp. We look to them to do so in the months and years ahead.

That is the economic backdrop to the Bill. The Opposition may not welcome it, because economic success for Britain means political oblivion for them, but the economic success is a reality.

This is a substantial Bill. It runs to 139 clauses and 10 associated schedules. The centrepiece is the income tax changes in clauses 22 to 24 which affect all taxpayers. They create in Britain the lowest basic rate of income tax since the second world war. The basic rate is now down to the same level as the reduced rate under the last Labour Government and personal allowances are now 25 per cent. higher in real terms than they were in 1979. The United Kingdom will also have one of the simplest personal tax structures in any country and one of the lowest top rates.

The logic of these reforms is accepted throughout the world by Governments across the political spectrum. It is plain common sense that incentives are vital to improve economic performance. The Opposition do not necessarily accept that. Their anxieties about tax changes are consistent and have been with them for many years. We have been in this situation before. Last month's ritual denunciation of the higher rate cuts had a familiar ring about it.

I remind the House of what the Opposition spokesman —the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—said when winding up the debate after the Government's first Budget in 1979. He justified voting against cutting the top rate of tax from 83 to 60 per cent. with these words:

"the Chancellor of the Exchequer is looking for . . . an effort, in income terms, by the existing elite of British industry, commerce and administration. For several reasons, I believe that is a nonsensical expectation. Of course, the recipients of his largesse will be pleased. However, will they work harder and more productively than at present? Will they be galvanised, to use that new and fashionable word? Will they be encouraged to invest more? . . . Previous experience, when Tory Chancellors cut surtax and income tax, reveals no correlation in the United Kingdom between the performance of economy and the levels of personal taxation."—[*Official Report*, 18 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. 1028.]

As we have cut taxation, the economy has continued to improve. The right hon. Gentleman now has his answer, which is clear to everyone. The evidence is that, far from the then Chancellor's expectations being nonsensical, the right hon. Gentleman's strictures were wrong. The result of the increased effort, high productivity and, indeed, galvanisation, is an upsurge in revenue from higher rate taxpayers. Despite the top rate cuts, and despite the abolition of the investment income surcharge, the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers paid one third more in income tax in 1987-88 than when we took office.

Now, even the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) says that it is "highly unlikely" that Labour would reimpose a top rate of 80 or 90 per cent. It is highly unlikely, of course, that Labour would have the opportunity. It is limping along in the wake of Conservative policy. Even now, after nine years in Opposition, Labour has no coherent tax policy. All it offers is a tone of envy in general and nothing in detail.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Does the Minister consider the reduction in income tax as the jewel in the Conservative crown? Has he seen the figures that his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave me in answer to a parliamentary question? The burden of taxation as a whole, including national insurance and VAT and everything else has hardly moved since 1979. It is 39·3 per cent. at the moment. It was 39·36 per cent. in 1979. In virtually every single year that the Government have been in office, the real tax burden has been higher than it was in 1979.

Mr. Major: Do I take it that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) will encourage Opposition Members to vote for the tax reductions in the Budget and then to vote for more tax reductions? When one costs their programme, it is clear that taxes would go up beyond any capacity to pay.

I make a prediction to the hon. Gentleman. Just as no credible economic spokesman for the Labour party now proposes a return to 83 per cent. or 98 per cent. taxation, nor, after their next election defeat, will any Labour economic spokesman demand the reimposition of a 60 per cent. top rate. For by then we will have seen the economic benefits which flow from this further measure to boost enterprise, effort, productivity—indeed, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney once put it, to "galvanise" our most talented and skilled people.

f by then the Labour Front Bench has still not learnt that lesson, we may find a place in our public expenditure plans to buy them one-way tickets to Australia and New Zealand for urgent discussion with their Labour colleagues who have discovered the advantages of cutting taxes. It would be money well spent to send them there. If they learn the lesson, it might even be worth paying for return tickets to bring them back.

[Mr. Major]

The controversy over the higher rate cuts has overshadowed the important measures in clauses 22 and 24—the reduction in the basic rate of tax to 25p in the pound and the double indexation of allowances. Clause 22 means that we have achieved the target we set in 1979: to provide a marginal rate of tax of 25p not just for the 4·5 million who were in Labour's reduced rate band, but for 23 million taxpayers—94 per cent. of the total. Clause 24 takes further the increases in allowances.

The married man's allowance is now at its highest level since the war. We could have achieved our basic rate objective far earlier had we not devoted resources to increased income tax allowances. But we believed then and we believe now that allowances in 1979 were too low, and that too many people paid tax on too modest incomes and we wished to take action to alleviate that. The effect of those increases is that 1·7 million people, nearly one quarter of them elderly, who would have been paying tax if we had simply kept allowances constant in real terms, now pay no income tax at all as a result of the changes.

Lower personal income tax opens the way for further reform to the tax system. There are provisions in the Bill to clamp down on a range of unjustified tax breaks—clause 44 reduces the under-taxation of company cars. Even so, the tax valuation for tax purposes will still fall far short of the true value of the benefit.

Clause 63 will bring to an end the abuse of forestry relief as a tax shelter. In future, Government assistance to forestry will be better targeted through a new grant scheme which will better realise our environmental objectives. Under the new scheme, grants will be available for planting to improve landscape, habitat and recreational amenities as well as timber production. All woodlands will be subject to clear environmental guidelines. Some people have criticised the fact that conifer planting will continue to receive support. They should remember that broadleaves cannot be grown in all areas and that the main market for timber in this country is for soft wood.

Clause 42 abolishes mortgage interest relief for home improvement loans, thus targeting relief on the main objective of home ownership and removing the scope for abuse about which the Public Accounts Committee has expressed concern. The Bill also removes top slicing reliefs for lump sum payments such as golden handshakes, which are no longer justified with lower tax rates.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Minister spoke about unjustified tax breaks. Does he regard higher rates of tax relief on mortgage interest as a more justified tax relief than tax relief on home improvements?

Mr. Major: The point about mortgage interest relief is that it should be put to the purpose for which it was intended. The Public Accounts Committee expressed concern that that was not necessarily the case for mortgage interest relief on home loans. I draw that distinction for the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

The Finance Bill also contains important measures to simplify the tax system—not least in the nightmarishly complex area of non-charitable covenants and maintenance. Clauses 35 to 39 will sweep away a complex set of rules which involve the taxpayer in a lengthy process of claiming relief or repayments from the Inland Revenue. New covenants, apart from covenants to charity, will be taken out of the tax system altogether. New maintenance payments will be free of tax, and tax relief for the payer will be subject to a limit.

These changes will make the system much simpler all round. In particular, they will reduce the tax burden for separated and divorced wives on modest incomes, and limit the tax relief available to wealthy husbands. They will also remove a disincentive on wives who want to work, who will no longer have some of their personal allowance used up by their maintenance.

Clauses 31 to 34 and clause 98 introduce independent taxation for married women—perhaps the single most important innovation in the 1988 Budget. I must say that I am a touch surprised that the Opposition have given this measure so little recognition. I will not dwell in detail on the anachronisms of the present system, which treats a married woman's income and gains as if they belonged to her husband, nor shall I attempt to explain in detail the new provisions, which we shall have the indubitable pleasure of discussing in Committee.

The crucial point is that the system we propose will give all married women full independence and privacy and achieve this sooner than the other alternatives canvassed. It will continue to recognise marriage. It will give all women a personal allowance and capital gains tax annual exemption in their own right.

There is a further point. It will bring significant financial benefits to a very large number of elderly married women with small incomes who receive pensions on the basis of their husband's contributions. At present such a pension is taxed at the husband's rate. Under independent taxation it will be treated as the wife's income and elderly wives will have their own age-related personal allowance to set against it. I think that the effect has not yet been fully appreciated but, in fact, around 160,000 elderly couples—nearly 15 per cent. of the total—will be taken out of tax altogether as a result of the change.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Minister is not telling the whole story. The marriage tax allowance is still given to the man and can be transferred to the woman only with his consent. If the Minister is serious about creating equality of opportunity for women, why is there no tax incentive for workplace nurseries, as that would stop the taxing of toddlers?

Mr. Major: The hon. Lady's latter point is a non sequitur. Her first point raises the problem that to allow choice would place substantial cost on the whole system of independent taxation. That is the difficulty that we face. The rules would be more complicated for taxpayers and for the Inland Revenue and would compromise privacy and independence. Most important, it would not have been possible to implement the scheme by 1990. I understand and appreciate the hon. Lady's point, but we had to take a judgment, so we took the choice to which the hon. Lady refers. Her second point was not a matter arising out of this Finance Bill.

There is a further point concerning the penalties on marriage, which the hon. Lady nearly encouraged me to forget. As well as removing the unjust treatment of married women, the Bill also removes, for all practical purposes, the discrimination against marriage which exists in the tax system. Clause 41 will apply the limit on mortgage interest relief to the house or flat so that married and unmarried couples will get the same amount of relief.

Under clause 29, an unmarried couple living together with children will get only one additional personal allowance between them, so that they get no more tax relief than a married couple.

In addition to these substantial reforms of the income tax system, the Bill includes a number of significant changes in capital taxation which build upon earlier reforms. Clause 91 will mean that only real capital gains are taxed, ending the injustice of taxing paper gains. This will benefit the economy by unlocking many assets acquired pre-1982 and free the resulting capital for new and productive investment.

Clause 92 will charge gains at income tax rates, reducing the incentive to convert income into gains, purely to avoid tax. It will mean that basic rate taxpayers see a reduction of five percentage points in their rate of tax, while higher rate taxpayers will see an increase of 10 per cent. on their capital gains. That reform is possible only because we have reduced the top rate of tax.

The Bill also contains provisions to reduce the burden of inheritance tax significantly. Clause 127 introduces a flat 40 per cent. rate with a threshold over twice as high in real terms as in 1979. And the number of tax-paying estates will be reduced by one quarter, allowing many more people to inherit the family home entirely free of tax.

These changes will be of particular and enormous help to those running family businesses. They are of social as well as economic importance, too, because they allow the family business, the small shop, or the small farm to be passed on intact between generations. That is critical to maintaining the social fabric of many of our small towns and villages. We have come a considerable way from the capital transfer tax that we inherited, with its threshold of only £25,000 and its 17 rates on gifts and 14 rates on bequests.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Major: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman on that point.

The Bill makes a number of improvements to the business expansion scheme. The Opposition profess to regard the scheme as no more than a tax shelter for the rich. They ignore the boost the BES has given to investment and enterprise.

Mr. John Smith: The Minister has passed over clause 128. What is the purpose of that clause, which releases from inheritance tax gifts to political parties in excess of £100,000? Why is that change being made?

Mr. Major: The change is being made for a variety of sound reasons. If, one day, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is able to produce satisfactory policies, he may find that even his party benefits from the provisions of that clause.

Mr. Smith: For what reasons is the change being made?

Mr. Major: Because, among other reasons, it places bequests of that kind on the same sort of level playing field as bequests made by legatees to other bodies. It is no doubt a matter that we shall discuss next week in the Committee of the whole House and on other occasions.

Mr. Smith: Is one to understand from the justification offered by the Chief Secretary that this inducement to people to leave money to the Conservative party is because the Conservative party is to be incorporated into a charity?

Mr. Major: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman grows too excited about that, I remind him that when the last Labour Government were in power charities and political parties were treated in precisely the same way for tax purposes. The position is exactly the same now. The right hon. and learned Gentleman ought to look at the history of his own party before criticising the Government's legislation.

So far, over 3,000 companies have raised over £750 million under the business expansion scheme. An independent study in 1985 by Peat, Marwick, McLintock found that only a third of BES finance would have been raised as equity without the scheme. When my right hon. Friend introduced the scheme in 1983, the venture capital industry in this country was still in its infancy, and unquoted companies of all sizes often found it difficult to raise equity finance from outside investors. Five years on, we have now reached a point where the United Kingdom venture capital industry has been so revitalised that larger companies can now readily raise equity finance without the need for special tax relief.

Accordingly, clause 50 reduces the relief available by introducing a limit of £500,000 on the total investment in a company which can qualify for tax relief in any one year under the scheme. That is intended to concentrate relief on investment in smaller local companies who find it more difficult to raise equity capital outside the business expansion scheme.

There is a further change to BES in clause 49, which extends the business expansion scheme to investment in companies specialising in letting residential property on new-style assured tenancy terms only. As the House knows, these will provide security of tenure for tenants. Landlords will be able to obtain possession on only limited grounds, broadly similar to those applied by existing Rent Acts.

The lack of a private rented sector has long been a barrier to job mobility and job creation. People who want to move to find work have been prevented by the difficulties of obtaining council housing and by the problems and cost of buying new homes. This new relief will give a kick start to the provision of readily available rented housing to help people move to new jobs more easily. Moreover, by increasing mobility around the country, it will ease skill shortages and help to reduce the disparities of regional unemployment.

We are determined that there should be a flourishing private rented sector to give people a real alternative to owner-occupation or to what is all too often simply a place on a council waiting list.

The Opposition will seek to conjure up the vision of a return to Rachman.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Precisely.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman says, "Precisely." He makes the point extremely eloquently, but to do so is to trivialise the debate.

It is only in this country that the very existence of a private rented sector is a matter of political dispute. Elsewhere a choice between owning and renting in the private or public sectors is the accepted norm because it

[Mr. Major]

allows people a flexibility which our system does not permit. In Germany, the latest figures show that 43 per cent. of property is privately rented, in France the figure is 36 per cent. and in the USA it is 33 per cent. In the United Kingdom it is less than 10 per cent. because of the hostility of the Labour party to the privately rented sector. We are absolutely determined that British families should enjoy not only the right to buy but the right to move. This will provide it for them.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am grateful to the Chief Secretary for giving way in his usual courteous manner. Is it not a fact that the Rent Act 1957, introduced by a Conservative Government, was supposed to lead to a far greater amount of rented accommodation in the private sector? However, it led to the Rachmanite scandal and to a reduction in the amount of privately rented accommodation.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that apart from the Rachmans of the past there is Nicholas Hoogstraten, a notorious landlord whom the Secretary of State for the Environment has been trying to get into court, but to no avail? It is precisely that person, and those like him, who will do best out of this legislation.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is wrong about that. I share his distaste for the Rachman-like methods of years ago. This provision applies to assured tenancy schemes only. I agree with what I take to be the hon. Gentleman's view, that the impact of Rent Acts over a period of time has severely diminished and destroyed the privately rented sector. We wish to deregulate and to provide a privately rented sector, not least to expand choice and to provide an opportunity for mobility. We hope that the Opposition will not place the same impediments in the way of success as they have placed in the past.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): What does the Chief Secretary have to say about the view of the Institute of Housing about this matter? Its view is

"that it will not really have much of an impact in terms of meeting housing need. Our concern is its short-term nature (5 years) and the obvious incentives to obtain vacant possession at the end of that period."

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman is making the case that at the end of the five-year period we should extend it, I am content to listen to any representations that he has in mind, but this is a time-limited scheme. The intention is to give a kick start to the privately rented sector.

We wish to ensure that a good deal of the accommodation that could be made available is made available, to provide a better total quantity and quality of accommodation for people to live in. It is one of the great tragedies of post-war social history that for dogmatic and theological reasons the Labour party has constantly opposed the provision of privately rented property.

Mr. Darling: If the Chief Secretary is serious about increasing mobility and choice, rather than giving a tax handout to those who would speculate in providing rented property, would it not be better to restore the same amount of money to individuals by way of housing benefit so that they would have beter purchasing power and would be able to exercise choice, including being able to move to this part of the country where houses are so expensive? All that the Chief Secretary seems to be doing is exhuming Rachman and wishing him the best of luck.

Mr. Major: It is not so much the purchasing power as the supply of accommodation at which this measure is aimed.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): My right hon. Friend has been more than polite in pausing on this point because I know that he wishes to speak on many other matters. However, he may take it from me, as one who has lived for many years in the United States, that that very mobile society has been able to provide a rental market of a quality and price that is attractive to large numbers of ordinary people who wish to move, because the rented sector has been able to work out the market. This country has been damaged by the inability of the market to work. I wish my right hon. Friend well with his clause.

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree without qualification with his remarks and I am content to rest on them.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend recall that when we introduced the right to buy in what is now the Housing Act 1980, the Opposition were strongly opposed to that provision? Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that now that the Opposition are opposing our measures to bring into use property that is at present empty or underused, and to attract private money into building new property for renting, they are just as out of touch about the prospective tenants whose champions they claim to be as they were about the right to buy?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend, who is a distinguished former Minister of Housing, is entirely right. I confirm the message that he essentially gave. We need no lectures from the Labour party about how to produce good housing or about the right either to enjoy ownership or to rent. The Oposition were wholly wrong about the right to buy, and they are wholly wrong about the right to move.

The Bill contains a range of other useful measures affecting businesses. I shall mention only the most important—and I may say to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that I am moderate by instinct. That is a virtue I offer Opposition Members as well.

In parallel with the basic rate tax cut, the small companies' rate of corporation tax falls to 25p, which is the lowest level since the war. Capital gains tax rebasing will enable many companies to unlock pre-1982 assets for new investment and reduce their tax bills by £235 million in 1989-90. Clause 132 will abolish the capital duty levied on companies being formed or expanding, so removing a significant proportion of the cost of capital issues. That is the fifth major tax to be abolished by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has now abolished more taxes than the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) introduced. In all the circumstances, the House may consider that to be a remarkable record.

The Bill will modernise also the rules on company residence and migration, removing the Treasury's outdated discretionary powers and replacing them with new, straightforward and objective rules. It will respond to representations from the building societies by removing the present tax obstacles in the way of societies seeking to convert to public limited companies. The Bill will improve

administrative arrangements for taxing Lloyd's members in line with our objective of ensuring that they are taxed effectively but fairly, in a way that reflects the special features of Lloyd's operations.

The Bill contains a package of measures designed to implement reforms of tax administration advocated by the Keith committee. It is a balanced package providing for both relaxation and tighter rules where justified. Clauses 112 to 121 give the Inland Revenue appropriate powers to uncover tax defaulters. Those measures result from extensive consultation with representative bodies and with the public, and they have received overwhelming support.

Clauses 11 and 12 increase Customs and Excise powers for dealing with fraud and commercial smuggling, bringing the legislation more closely in line with mainstream criminal laws. As well as those tightening measures, the Bill includes some easements of the VAT civil penalty regime, which will be of considerable benefit to businesses.

Clause 10 updates the Customs' power of search of person contained in section 164 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. That section has remained virtually unchanged for 30-odd years—a period during which drug smuggling has become a widespread and serious problem. The clause will bring Customs' power of search more closely into line with the police, with the various additional safeguards proposed by the Keith committee. It clearly defines categories of search and provides necessary powers of detention for search.

No one likes being searched—it can be extremely distasteful. Nevertheless, that power is necessary if we are to have any power over smuggling. The updated power provided by clause 10 will equip Customs officers with sensible methods of detecting and deterring smugglers while reinforcing the statutory safeguards provided for suspects.

Last month's Budget repeated 1987's economic hat trick of tax reductions, higher public expenditure and sharply reduced borrowing. This year my right hon. Friend is planning for a public sector debt repayment of £3 billion. That is a remarkable achievement by any yardstick.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I have given way sufficiently; the hon. Gentleman must catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In last month's debates on the Budget—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Brown: Can the Chief Secretary confirm that he has the money to relieve the suffering of pensioners as a result of the changes made to housing benefit? Can he confirm also that instead of giving tax cuts to the 1,000 richest people in the country, he could have paid the £70 million that is the cost of relieving the capital level for pensioners from £6,000 to £10,000? Can he further confirm that it is not an absence of cash that prevents the Government from acting on this important issue but a complete absence of compassion?

Mr. Major: I assume that that was a trailer for the hon. Gentleman's speech, and we shall await it with considerable interest. I may tell the hon. Gentleman that the results of the Government's economic policies have enabled us in the past few weeks to meet in full the pay review awards to nurses, doctors, dentists and those serving in the armed services. That could not have been done if the public finances were not in good order.

Mr. John Smith *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East could have spoken in this debate, had he wished to do so. Perhaps he will permit me to finish—*[Interruption.]* The Chancellor is not shouting like a banshee from a seated position.

In our debate on the public expenditure White Paper, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said that to exclude an increase for the National Health Service from the Budget would be

"an unprecedented act of malice."—[*Official Report*, 24 February 1988; Vol. 128, c. 319.]

The hon. Gentleman now has his answer. More importantly, the nurses, the doctors and the dentists have their money, and the hon. Gentleman was wrong as usual. Not only will they benefit from the 2p cut in the basic rate of tax in the Finance Bill, and from the doubling of personal allowances, but they will now receive a pay increase everaging 15·3 per cent.—ranging as high as 60 per cent.

Much of that is the direct result of the agreement on the grading review reached with the nurses as long ago as last December. It is a cost that the Government will fund in full and a cost that the Government can meet in full only because of the strength of our public finances and the control we have kept over expenditure.

Only the British Labour party retains its dinosaur attitude to tax reductions. It is ironic that in the same week that the Labour party in Westminster was digging into its entrenched opposition to the higher rate cuts, one of the party's paymasters—the Transport and General Workers Union—was robbing the Scottish people of 1,000 jobs in Dundee. That is a timely reminder of Labour's priorities of increased taxation and a return to trade union restrictive practices—both calculated to destroy jobs and not create them.

Our Budget encourages enterprise and creates incentives and it stimulates success and promotes jobs. It is a Budget designed to achieve greater opportunity and prosperity. The measures to achieve them are in the Finance Bill and I commend it to the House.

4.49 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): The one point on which both sides of the House are agreed is the fundamental importance of this Finance Bill. However, what the Chief Secretary described as an economic miracle will be unknown to 2·5 million people who are unemployed, and to 18 million who are on low incomes. In his naive belief that the nurses' settlement, however welcome, will solve the problems of the National Health Service, and in his vigorous defence of the Bill—as befits a Minister marked out as the Cabinet's fastest rising star since the Secretary of State for Social Services—the Chief Secretary seemed to go out of his way to avoid mention of the central fact that informs the entire Bill. That central fact is that, as a result of the changes in top rate tax and personal allowances——

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Did we mishear, or did the hon. Gentleman mention 18 million low-paid people?

Mr. Brown: I said 18 million, and I defend that figure. That is the figure published by the Department of Health and Social Security, which gave 16 million as the number of people on low incomes, on the latest figures that were available to it. When that figure is updated as a result of all the changes made because of the social security cuts, we arrive at a figure of 18 million people on low incomes. That includes mothers, children and wage earners—*[Interruption.]* I should have thought that Conservative Members would be concerned about the poverty and destitution throughout the country. I should have thought that, instead of laughing about housing benefit cuts and the freezing of child benefit, they would be anxious to do something about problems that affect 18 million people.

The central fact that underlies the entire Bill is this. Taking together the top rate tax reductions and other changes, the top 1 per cent.—who are uniquely privileged as a result of previous decisions by Chancellors of the present Government—gained more than the majority of people in this country put together. In one line of one sentence of one clause of the Bill, £2,100 million in a full year is given away to those who previously faced taxation at the very top rates.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Can the hon. Gentleman tell me straightforwardly whether he prefers a higher top rate of tax for high earners, which none the less produces a lower return for the Exchequer, or a lower top rate of tax that produces a higher return?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening at this stage. I had expected the question, but thought that it might come later, when we had addressed some of the problems in the Bill. Obviously the hon. Gentleman has been told to ask it very early.

Having expected the question, Opposition Members did some research. Let me say to the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor that if the top 5 per cent. in this country are paid increases which they advocate that their own workers should not receive, but which amount to 300 per cent. over the past eight years, and if the rest of the country receives substantially smaller increases, we would expect—even with the reduction of top rate taxes in the economy—the share raised from the top 5 per cent. to be higher.

If the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) thinks that it is axiomatic that the reduction of top rates will raise higher revenues, let him look at the Red Book produced by the Chancellor, in which the Treasury sought to make the best estimate of the effect of the top rate tax reduction in a full year. The answer that it came up with was not an increase as a result of the change in revenues but a reduction of some £2 billion.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The hon. Gentleman has quoted the Red Book, but he has not quoted the footnote that says that the figures assume no change in behaviour.

Mr. Brown: Let the Financial Secretary give me proof of what those changes in behaviour are likely to be. I had thought that the Treasury was under some obligation to produce the best estimate that it could deliver. If the best estimate that can be delivered is that £2 billion is being sacrificed as a result of the top rate tax cuts in a full year, that is the estimate that we must go on.

Let me also say to the Financial Secretary that the last budget director who gave us the impression—in America—that top rate tax reductions would raise far higher revenues was Mr. David Stockman, who had to recant just about everything that he had said about the Laffer theory and everything else in a highly publicised book. He spoke the truth when he said that the agreements for top rate tax reductions that were extended on the basis of some such economic theory as the Laffer curve were simply a Trojan horse to allow the rich to get richer without making any increased contribution to the economic efficiency of the country.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall give way in a minute.

The fundamental feature of this Bill is the growing gap between rich and poor that will result from the tax changes announced by the Chancellor. That commitment to widening inequality—even at the cost of those who will experience deepening poverty—infuses just about every major clause of the Bill. Only 35,000 people will benefit from changes in inheritance tax that will cost the rest of the nation £200 million. No more than 100,000 people are likely to benefit from the £235 million exemption on capital gains before 1982. Only a few hundred are likely to benefit from the changes in the business expansion scheme described by the Chief Secretary this afternoon, to which we shall return later.

I predict that the biggest gainers from what should have been a major reform in independent taxation will be couples with substantial sums of unearned income and capital gains, both of which will be disaggregated as a result of clauses in the Bill. That will be its most costly feature.

Mr. Shaw *rose*——

Mr. Brown: Let me finish.

The Bill widens the gap between rich and poor so much, and inequality is so much its central feature, that it is hardly surprising that a Conservative Member said on Budget day, "There are just not enough noughts on my pocket calculator to work out my winnings."

I shall give way to the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw)—and I do not take his intervention as an admission that he is the guilty Member.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman said that the tax reductions in the United States of America had had no serious effect. Does he deny that there has been an increase of 8 million in the number of people employed in America while those tax reductions have taken place? Has not unemployment in this country fallen by 1 million because there have been tax reductions, and because those who benefit from them are the people who invest in and expand new businesses?

Mr. Brown: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is advising the Chancellor how he should run his economic policy. I must tell him, however, that one reason for the substantial budget deficit in the United States is that the predictions made in the early years of the Reagan revolution that top rate tax reductions would yield massively increased revenues have not proved correct.

The Chancellor is unique among Chancellors throughout the world in regard to change in the top rates of tax. We are mentioned in New Zealand, Australia and everywhere else, because he alone has chosen to cut the top rates without making any substantial impact on the number of tax loopholes that make it possible for people

earning substantial sums to avoid tax liabilities. If the Chancellor doubts what I am saying, let him read the parliamentary answers that I have been given by the Financial Secretary.

In one instance I asked the Chancellor what would be the tax liability of someone earning £1 million who chose to use many of the tax devices invented by the Chancellor and his predecessor since 1979, such as the business expansion scheme and enterprise zones, in which unlimited sums can be set against tax. The answer that I received from the Financial Secretary was that a person earning £1 million, if he used all the loopholes available to him, could end up with a tax liability of nil. How does he defend the fact that someone earning more than £50 a week pays tax at a rate of 25 per cent., that a couple earning more than £80 a week pay tax at 25 per cent., but that a person earning £1 million a year can end up with a tax liability of nil?

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): How could such a person obtain an income on which to live?

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor's changes have not been so inventive that they have prevented people from taking out loans on the basis of their investments and having sufficient spending power as a result, for example, of off-setting the rents that they earn from enterprise zone properties against the interest they have to pay to the banks. Uniquely, such people not only have the capital gains in the future and the tax reductions in the present, but sufficient money to live on at the same time, giving them a high standard of living.

I want to look at how the Budget will affect the majority of my constituents as well as some Conservative Members. I have to tell the Chancellor that, despite the talk that everybody will receive a 2p tax reduction, helping those at the bottom end in exactly the same way as those at the top, there are people on £100 a week, low wage earners, getting by on family credit and housing benefit, whose net gain from the Budget, after the withdrawal of housing benefit because of the tax cuts, will only be about 9p a week, or £4·68 a year. Then there is the family on £120 a week, with housing benefit not yet taken away by the Chancellor and family credit, who will receive about 30p a week as a result of the tax changes in the Budget and the resulting withdrawal of benefits.

If the Chancellor and Conservative Members believe that I am talking about special cases or isolated instances, as they thought when we first mentioned the problems of the housing benefit changes, let me tell them that, in addition to the 8 million or so people who cannot benefit from a tax cut because their earnings are so small, there are 2·5 million people throughout Britain whose average gain as a result of the Budget changes is 13p a week—a gain that is almost entirely wiped out by the electricity price rise that was ordained by the Secretary of State for Energy just before the Budget.

But the real beneficiaries of the Budget are those at the top. I do not know whether the Chancellor realises it, but if someone is earning £50,000 a year his net gain from income tax is £75 a week; on £70,000 a year it is £152 a week—more than £7,500 a year; on £100,000 a year, it is £268 a week, or more than £12,500 a year. The man on £200,000 a year is getting £650 a week as a result of the Budget changes and the richest earner in Britain will receive an automatic windfall as a result of the Chancellor's changes of £500,000 a year.

The real truth about the biggest beneficiaries of the Budget was admitted in an answer given to me by the Financial Secretary on 28 March when I asked him who gained most from the top rate tax reductions. It is not the scientists, the engineers, the teachers and the lecturers—the people whom the Chief Secretary continues to mention—who are the true beneficiaries of the Budget. What the Financial Secretary had to tell me was that the real beneficiaries, those who gained the most, those who received windfall sums, were the 140,000 people on the top rate tax band of 60 per cent. who cumulatively received £1,700 million in a full year as a result of the Budget. In other words, 80 per cent. of the gains from the top rate tax reductions have gone to a small number of people—140,000; less than 1 per cent. of the population of Britain.

Why did the Chancellor decide that those people were to be so uniquely privileged that they should be targeted for special help? Since 1979 they have already received more than £13 billion in tax cuts. As a result of this Budget they have received an extra £1·7 billion.

A few weeks ago I heard the Chief Secretary telling ordinary earners that, as a result of the Budget tax cuts, to keep pace with inflation they need ask for wage rises of only 2 per cent. a year. He was suggesting, as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry did in the other place, that, the proper negotiating level for wage increases in the next year should be in the order of 2 per cent.

When the Chancellor made his decision about the top rate tax reductions, did he consider the position of those people in that 1 per cent? Did he recall—as is confirmed most recently in the top salaries review document—that those very people, at the same time as they have been telling others to mitigate their wage demands, have been awarding themselves rises of up to 20 per cent. a year? Did he look at the Treasury's own calculations that the very same people would this year be awarding themselves wage rises of about 12 per cent?

Did he then say that, as a result of the wage rises that he expected them to have in order to keep pace with inflation, there should be a levelling through the tax system? Not at all. What the Chancellor did was to accept that the top people in Britain, those earning £50,000, £70,000, £100,000, had been paying themselves wage rises of between 10 to 20 per cent. every year, and will pay themselves a wage rise of 12 per cent. in the coming year, and then he awarded them a tax cut worth 10 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The hon. Gentleman has been talking about high earners, but will he turn his attention to a man on average earnings with two children who, under the Labour Government, had an increase of 0·5 per cent. in real terms, compared with a 27·5 per cent. increase in real terms under this Government? Does not that underline why men on average earnings vote Conservative?

Mr. Brown: That is exactly what the Chief Secretary was suggesting to us at Treasury questions only a few days ago, and I have no doubt that his supporters have been briefing the hon. Gentleman. But let him look at the Government's record on taxation since 1979. Let him look at the cumulative effects of income tax, national insurance and VAT. He will no doubt find—this is something that

[Mr. Brown]

horrified the Institute of Directors, which demanded before the Budget that the average tax rates be cut—that the total tax take from the average earner with two children has risen from about 23 per cent. to 25 per cent., despite our being told that every Budget of the past nine years has been a tax-cutting Budget. The share of the ordinary earner's income taken in income tax, VAT and national insurance has risen, and that is the real position under this Government.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman and he is making some important points. However, as one who has had the fortune, or misfortune, to listen to some 24 Budget debates in the House, let me say that there is one big difference. The hon. Gentleman is saying that some people at the top gain too much and others at the bottom gain too little. I understand what he is saying, but does he accept that the time was, when the Labour party was in office, when everybody lost—the disabled, small businesses, pensioners and the country? Now we are arguing about who should gain. That is the big change: we are talking about gains, not losses.

Mr. Brown: Tomorrow, during the debate on housing benefit, the hon. Gentleman will realise that not everybody has been a gainer under this Government.

The issue of this debate is this. When I see that, as a result of the social security changes, an unemployed young person in my constituency will receive £26·05 a week; when I see that a pensioner will receive only £41·15 a week; when I see that a family of four will receive only £79 a week, and when at the same time I see Conservative Members defending a situation whereby people at the top are given tax cuts that are worth more in a week than such families and pensioners will receive in total benefit in a year, I ask myself what possible justification, in merit, in need, in contribution to the community, in anything to do with the ideology of incentives, there can be for such inequalities.

I find that there is no respectable evidence; there is no authority to study; there is no definitive survey. There is nothing at home or abroad that can justify the ideology of incentives producing the results that have been claimed for it by this Government.

I want to look at one of the main arguments that the Chief Secretary has used, because the Prime Minister made great play of it immediately after the Budget. We are told by the Chief Secretary and the Government that, as a result of these top rate tax cuts, people who left this country will return and people who may think of going will no longer leave. We are told that these people are doctors, scientists, engineers and university academics. We are told, further, that those people can be persuaded to stay or persuaded to return to this country.

Let us leave aside for the moment the issue that the average engineer earns £19,000, the average doctor between £25,000 and £30,000 and the university lecturer between £20,000 and £25,000. That is according to the figures that we have available. Let us also leave aside the fact that these people are not the big gainers from the Budget. The big gainers are those people earning £50,000, £60,000 or £70,000, which are salaries that engineers can never hope to have in this country.

Let us look at the argument on its own merits. We were told after 1979 that top rate tax cuts would bring all these people back—the engineers and the scientists. However, the evidence is that they have departed at even a faster rate. When the Prime Minister told us a few days ago that since 1983 more people than ever had returned to this country, she forgot to tell us that more people than ever were leaving. We know that the number of professional and managerial employees leaving this country has doubled. Britain contributes more scientists and engineers to what is called the transatlantic brain drain than all other European countries put together.

We also know that a former Minister with responsibilities for higher education, when writing in *The Times* in 1987, said quite specifically about the top rate taxes and everything else—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) will listen to me. A former Minister with responsibilities for higher education said that young scientists and engineers are refugees, not from the Treasury but from the cumulative effects on British science of educational, fiscal and cultural failing. If doctors are moving abroad, it is not because of the top rate taxes that have to be paid. It is because the facilities are not here for them to do the research that they want to do.

The House of Lords Select Committee confirmed that only a few days ago. If scientists and academics are leaving the country it is because, as the Vice-Chancellors' committee has said, they no longer have any reliable career structure and they find they have better facilities abroad. The most worrying aspect of all, as the Royal Society said recently, is that if academics in the science sector are leaving it is because they believe that cuts in basic research and scientific support mean that science in Britain is being progressively marginalised.

The answer to the problem that the Chief Secretary identifies is not that we impose top rate tax cuts on those earning more than £50,000 a year. The real answer to that problem is for that money to be used properly to fund science, technology, education and training, our universities and colleges, our Health Service and our medical research. This was not a Budget for meritocracy but a Budget geared more to the aristocracy in Britain. *[Interruption.]* I have to say to the Chancellor that he perhaps has not looked at all the calculations that he has made.

He probably knows that, having halved the number of people, for example, liable to inheritance tax, he is proposing very substantially to reduce the numbers again. Someone who inherits an estate of £1 million would get a benefit of £150,000 as a result of this Budget. However, some of these people do not pay the tax at all. The changes in capital gains tax give substantial amounts of money to people who were the beneficiaries of the property booms of the late 1970s.

I answer the point of the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary by saying that in this Budget they have not closed the tax loopholes. If they look at the enterprise zone scheme and the business expansion scheme, and look at all the schemes that exist for people to set their earnings against their tax, they will find that for every loophole closed by the Budget, another has been opened, which the tax planners and the tax avoiders will use to the full.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No. I will not give way again.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is unable to argue that these top rate tax cuts can be justified on the grounds of incentive, because he has produced no evidence whatsoever. He cannot say that they will prevent migration. He cannot say that they will prevent evasion, which has risen sevenfold during this Government's period of office, according to the published figures. He cannot look at the figures and argue any of these things.

In that case, what is the Chancellor's new argument? His new argument was launched again on Sunday in the programme "This Week, Next Week". It is that, somehow, by top rate tax reductions, the poor will benefit through the increase in charitable donations. That seems to be the best argument that the Chancellor can put forward—as *The Financial Times*, in a recent headline to one of his other speeches, said,

"The moral basis of tax cuts".

The right hon. Gentleman may think that the key fact is that charitable donations have increased twofold since 1979, but to people on the Opposition Benches the key fact is that the need for charitable donations has increased as a result of this Government's policy. Charitable donations may have increased twofold, but poverty among families has increased fourfold according to the estimates of the Government. Evictions have increased tenfold.

Mr. Major: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will not wish to mislead the House. May I say to him that the definition that he is using of poverty is a definition that is distorted by rising levels of benefit that this Government have introduced. That is a matter that is demonstrably clear to anyone who cares to look at the income support levels upon which he is basing his definition.

Mr. Brown: That point will be entirely lost on the pensioners of this country, whose income support level, which the right hon. Gentleman says is generous, is £44·05 as a result of the changes in the Social Security Act. It will be entirely lost on the many thousands of pensioners who, because of the capital limit that has been imposed—imposed during the time that the Minister was a Minister in the Department of Health and Social Services—have lost housing benefit because of the removal of exemptions. The truth is, as the Chief Secretary knows, and as the Chief Secretary is ashamed of, that the numbers of people in poverty in this country are rising. The social security changes have resulted in the numbers of people in poverty rising even further.

The Chancellor says that the number of people giving to charities has doubled, and that the amount of money given to charities has doubled. I accept that point. Is he saying that, in future, charity has to bridge the gap between the rich and poor in this country? Does he believe that charitable donations can make up for the £800 million lost through all the changes in social security benefit? Does he believe that charitable donations can pay the £1 billion and more that is still needed properly to fund the National Health Service this year? Does he say to Conservative Members on the Back Benches who have troubled consciences and who have many constituents affected by the housing benefit changes, that the best hope for the future is not to ask the Government to change the wrong policy, but that these people should beg and borrow from charities and voluntary organisations?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Brown: Well, if the Chancellor thinks that is not the case and that is not the policy that has been pursued by the Government, what do the new regulations that govern the social fund really mean? In the Act which governs the social fund and in the regulations, social fund officers are asked to look at how voluntary organisations and charities can help. That is exactly the position in which members of the Department of Health of Social Security have been put as a result of this Government's policies. I hope that the Chancellor—who appears to be in total ignorance of what has happened as a result of these regulations—will read the social fund regulations and respond to them in this House.

No industry is better prepared for the future as a result of this Finance Bill. No health authority is better funded as a result of the changes in the Finance Bill. Many health authorities throughout the country are waiting to know what the Government will do about increasing the number of nurses and about improving the capital programme for these hospitals. I advise the Chancellor that none of the poorest in our society are better off as a result of the Budget.

Last weekend, like many Conservative Members and many of my hon. Friends, I held constituency surgeries. In the years that I have been a Member of Parliament and involved in politics, I have never seen so many people so demoralised, so desolate and so devoid of hope—and that after the path-breaking Budget about which the Chief Secretary boasts.

A widow came to see me who has a pension of £41·15, who has received, and still receives, industrial death benefit because her husband died of asbestosis. She told me that she had counted the pennies for years and that she had made every economy that the Prime Minister had asked of her. She said that she had prepared herself for a rent rise of £1·50 but suddenly found that she was facing a housing benefit cut of more than £20. She said, "I thought that the Prime Minister had already taken from me everything that she could. I did not think that she would take any more."

What is the Government's response to the problem of poverty? The training manual for social fund officers suggests that such a pensioner lives on stale food, buys dented tins, grows her own vegetables, invests in tinfoil, avoids biscuits and jams, and states:

"Don't shop when hungry, you may be tempted to buy more than you need."

What sort of society is the Chief Secretary justifying when a widow in my constituency, on £41·15, loses £20 per week as a result of the housing benefit changes? What sort of society is he justifying when that happens and when, in one line of one sentence of one clause of this Finance Bill, so few people get so much?

In the past, Chancellors have come to the House to say that because revenues are rising, all will benefit and all will share. Other Chancellors have had to come to the House—from both parties—and say that because revenues are falling or because the economy is in difficulty, all must make sacrifices—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Chancellors as well—and that the sacrifices will be equally shared. No Chancellor until this one has come to this House and said that because revenues are rising as a result of North sea oil and everything else, the rich will get the benefit——

Mr. Norman Lamont *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No, I am not giving way—the rich will get the benefit——

Mr. Lamont: Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that North sea oil accounts for less than 2 per cent. of revenue?

Mr. Brown: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that North sea oil accounts for around £4 billion? Is he aware that no Chancellor until this one has had £5 billion a year in privatisation revenue? Is he aware that the reason he has been able to give tax cuts, mainly to those at the top, is that revenues from North sea oil and privatisation were available to him that were not available to any Labour Chancellor in the past?

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way.

No Chancellor until this one has come to the House and said that because of the money that is available to him, the rich will get the benefits and the poor will make the sacrifices. Past Conservative Governments have lived with a two-nation Britain. Some Conservative Governments have even sought to do something about it. However, no Conservative Government until this one, no Chancellor until this one, have so deliberately sought to make inequality and social division the main weapon of their economic and social policy. That is why we shall vote against the Finance Bill, and that is why, in so doing, we shall have the public on our side.

5.23 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): It is the fate of Chief Secretaries, after the glamour of Budget day, to regale the House with the details of the Finance Bill. However, my right hon. Friend's speech had a great deal more wit and cogent argument than some of his predecessors managed to exert when going into the nitty-gritty detail of the arrangements set out in successive Finance Bills.

This debate traditionally has two themes: on the one hand, it is a discussion of the specific tax proposals and, on the other hand, it embodies a wide-ranging financial debate. As the House knows, the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has traditionally taken the view that it is right to concentrate on the underlying economic situation and to analyse that, rather than to go into the detailed tax measures which are more appropriately discussed either across the Floor of the House or in Standing Committee, where the matters are typically debated on party lines. None the less, although I want to say something about the Committee's report, I begin by commenting on some of my right hon. Friend's specific tax proposals and more especially on the remarks of the hon Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

One might reasonably say, or paraphrase, "Happy is the Opposition spokesman who has no history," because the reality is that the contrast is not between this or that group which will benefit from the Finance Bill, but between those who are benefiting under the Bill and other measures that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has introduced on previous occasions, and what happened under Labour Governments. That contrast is remarkable.

However, I fear that in presentational terms we are not making the best of what my right hon. Friend has been doing, and not least of the fact that raising the tax threshold at which income tax becomes payable, which has risen twice as fast as is necessary to compensate for inflation, combined with the reduction in the standard rate of income tax, involve tax concessions for those at the bottom end of the income tax scale which are far bigger than anything that I can recall under any Labour Government. We need to get that point over strongly.

In addition, the revenue which will be raised as a result of the Finance Bill is providing massive resources on a scale that was undreamt of under Labour Governments, and which will help alleviate poverty and distress. I was astonished by a remark by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—that the Finance Bill does nothing to help the National Health Service. Of course, the proposals on the National Health Service were set out on a White Paper before the Budget, but they involve an extra £1 billion this year, an extra £1 billion next year and an extra £1 billion the year after that on the National Health Service.

On top of that, the full funding of the nurses' pay award, which was announced a day or two ago, amounts to about £750 million—approximately three quarters of a billion pounds. Therefore, the extra expenditure on the Health Service this year, provided for and financed by this Finance Bill, amounts to about £1·75 billion. Even allowing for inflation and everything else, there is no precedent of any Labour Government spending anything like that amount on the National Health Service as an additional amount.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): What advice would the right hon. Gentleman give to health authorities that have unfilled nursing vacancies and will now receive applications from people who wish to train as nurses but do not have in their budgets the sums available to pay those nurses now that they have received their pay increase? I should add that it is very good that the Government have funded that pay award fully this year, but whether they will fund it fully next year is another question. What should health authorities do if they wish to employ extra nurses but do not have the funds?

Mr. Higgins: I advise the hon. Gentleman, in the clearest possible terms, that the success of the Chancellor's economic policy has enabled us to spend a massive record extra amount on the Health Service as a whole, including on nurses' pay and on funding that award in full, with the result that the contingency plans that have been made for reducing shortages elsewhere in the Health Service will no longer be necessary. That is something of which this Conservative Government can rightly be proud. Successive Labour Governments should have been ashamed.

I turn from that point because I want to say something about the more detailed aspects of the Finance Bill, and especially about the underlying background to it, which were set out in the unanimous report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. As I have said, the Committee eschews comments of the kind that I have just made. On the Floor of the House, one can reasonably take up such matters.

Despite the tax cuts in the Budget and the massive increases in public expenditure, my right hon. Friend has achieved a balanced budget. Not only that, but he has ensured that such public sector borrowing as is necessary can be fully funded. In addition, the means necessary to sterilise the effects of intervention in foreign exchange markets have been fully funded.

On all previous occasions, we have been inclined to think that the effect of having a PSBR frequently not fully funded is the source of an increase in the money supply which gives cause for concern. What is interesting, after what has emerged from the analysis in the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's report, is that, once one draws back the curtains after balancing the budget and fully funding the operation of central Government, one sees none the less a substantial increase in credit. That is a cause for concern.

The Governor of the Bank of England pointed out in his evidence to the Committee that private borrowing since 1983-84 has continued to rise and is now estimated to be 12 per cent. of GDP. He also pointed out that domestic private sector borrowing has accelerated at over 20 per cent. a year in the past two years. Therefore, although it is unfashionable now to concentrate on the money supply as a measure of what is happening in the economy, the expansion of credit and perhaps the expansion in monetary aggregates gives us cause for concern.

Examining that more closely, as the Committee never ceases to do in pointing out that the private sector continues to borrow voraciously, how is that to be brought under control? What emerged very clearly in the evidence for instance of the Chancellor, who said that the essential instrument of monetary policy must remain short-term interest rates, or of the Governor of the Bank of England who said that the only effective instrument of monetary policy is the short-term rate, was the way in which that weapon seems to be remarkably ineffective. Therefore, because the PSBR funding point has become irrelevant in the present context, the weapon available to control the expansion of credit is not so useful as we might hope or think.

That situation gives us considerable cause for concern about future management of the economy, and the expansion of bank credit. It is particularly worrying that, despite the fact that public borrowing has been reduced to a point where the budget is balanced, there is still some concern about overheating in the economy, for the reasons that I have just mentioned.

The Committee rightly draws attention to the way in which the inflation rate has been brought down and is now flattening out. Against that background, the point that I made a moment ago is important, not least in the context of our international competitiveness. The forecast for the GDP deflator this year for the United Kingdom is 4·7. For the United States it is 3·4, for Germany 1·8 and for Japan 1·6. There is some danger, as the Governor of the Bank of England pointed out in evidence to the Committee, that we have become complacent in believing that somehow an inflation rate of 3, 4 or 5 per cent. is quite satisfactory, and everyone can be happy about it. Against the background of other countries' success in controlling inflation, we should not be complacent about that.

My third point relates to use of the exchange rate as an economic instrument. There has been much comment in the press about the differences that are said to exist—some, indeed, are admitted to exist—between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister on exchange rate policy. In particular, the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee usefully tagged on to an exotic expression of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, that in exchange rate policy matters one cannot "buck the market". Some of the press comment since the report was published concentrates excessively on personalities. It is a useful shorthand, but the Committee seeks to analyse the underlying dilemmas. I am sure that is the right approach. There are genuine dilemmas over policy. Therefore it did not seem to us in the Committee to be appropriate to come down in favour of one side of the argument or the other, in black and white terms, but rather to concentrate on the underlying issues.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Does the right hon. Member not see that it is a great pity that the Committee did not make a clear distinction between the views of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer? The Prime Minister clearly tried to pre-empt the Chancellor's discretion in dealing with the exchange rate. That is of great importance. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who won the election for the Prime Minister, is not the master of exchange rate policy, that is a serious matter, and I do not know what the Chancellor has left. It is a great pity that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has so muddied the waters that one cannot see what it had in mind.

Mr. Higgins: The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) has intervened in every speech that I have made in the past 15 years on a Finance Bill, but he is not usually witty on these matters.

I was seeking to say that there is much in favour of the arguments on both sides. That is what the Committee has sought to point out. Our conclusion is that if bucking the market means intervening, and buying and selling different currencies, that can be done reasonably in the short term to smooth the transitional arrangements, but one cannot buck the market in that way if it becomes very costly to do so.

On the other hand, if use of the other two major instruments of economic policy—interest rates and fiscal policy—is said to be bucking the market, one can do it, because the underlying fundamentals will be affected. Essentially our view is that one can buck the market by using interest rate policy and fiscal policy.

As the Chancellor said in answering a question from the Committee, there is no doubt that if one were to cut interest rates, that would probably cause downward movement in the exchange rate. That would buck the market. Similarly, if the tax concessions that my right hon. Friend has given in the Budget had been fewer, to that extent one might buck the market.

What worries me is a matter that was referred to in paragraph 53 of the Committee's report. The present situation gives cause for concern. When the sterling exchange rate broke through the DM3 barrier, the rise in the exchange rate would have indicated a tightening of monetary policy. It would have been possible at that point to reduce interest rates and, at the same time, achieve some exchange rate stability while maintaining —I stress that word "maintaining"—downward pressure on inflation.

What happened at first as a result of not doing that was that we were tightening inflationary pressure. We sacrificed exchange rate stability in relation to the deutschmark. It is clear from paragraph 53 of our report that we were very doubtful about that. It is not seem by industry or others as a sustainable change in the exchange rate. It is unlikely to have a long-term effect.

On the other hand, if one allows the pound to go up rather than stay in line with the deutschmark as it was it is likely to create a dangerous position when it comes down

[Mr. Higgins]

again. Rather than seeking a temporary tightening of anti-inflationary pressure, it would have been better to stay within the 3 deutschmark line and to maintain the undoubted downward pressure on inflation, while at the same time maintaining some exchange rate stability.

I agree with the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne that it is essential to have a clearer statement of exactly what the policy is. There is some danger that we have moved from the early period when the monetary aggregates, particularly M3, were said to be all-important with the consequences which then followed in 1979-80, to a period of considerable uncertainty about exactly what the policy is. That uncertainty, combined with the difficulties associated with the expansion of credit and the ineffectiveness of the interest rate weapon in that context, causes anxiety.

We are doing all that against a favourable background, which the Government have created and which has enabled my right hon. Friend the Chancellor both to make massive tax cuts which provide tremendously important incentives, and to increase hugely the resources going to the NHS and elsewhere. Those are all signs of his success in managing the economy. It is important to ensure that we continue that progress and I believe that that is possible. I hope that this Finance Bill will be welcomed by the House and the country, and that it will mark a further step forward in the advantages, now being seen, of the attitude of the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary and other Treasury colleagues.

5.41 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The House must always pay its tribute to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) for chairing the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee which produces its reports in good time for us to consider them. On this occasion it is only just in good time and we have not had a chance to digest much of the information conveyed in the report. Nevertheless, it is valuable and we know the time constraints under which the right hon. Gentleman and the Committee and their advisers work. We are grateful to them.

It is a pity that there seemed to be greater divisions than usual in the consideration and preparation of this report. I understand the problem: Government and Opposition Members cannot always see eye to eye. But in the past they have tried to limit their differences and to come up with something that represented rather more than this cocktail.

Perhaps the most important matter facing us is the crucial central question of the exchange rate. I support the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this. My support will not do him much good, but in this place properly held views should be put across and, at least on occasion, be subject to critical assessment rather than taken as yet another attack. That might have been the attitude of the Select Committee.

The Chancellor was right when he said that it was not sensible to discuss these market-sensitive matters in public as much as they were. That is a serious criticism of the Prime Minister. The Chancellor was in a powerful position, having contributed so much to winning the general election for the Prime Minister, and he found himself pre-empted by her in a statement in this House about bucking the market. She laid it down clearly that she disagreed with him immediately before the Budget. By saying that, she sought to bring him into line and to carry out her views. It is to his credit that he did not follow that line or do what Francis Pym and others have done, conceding victory to the Prime Minister on a matter on which they thought she was wrong. The Chancellor contained the problem.

That was serious, because the whole international financial world knew that there was a division between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. That made it clear that the level of the pound could rise above DM3, and it did. As soon as the disagreement was known, the financial community had an incentive to test where the upper limit was. Such arguments can take place, but they should never take place at such an exalted level in public. That was a great pity.

Paragraph 5 of the report states:

> "We remain somewhat puzzled by the Chancellor's continued insistence that there has been 'no change in policy', . . . although . . . the reduction of inflation has been the overriding objective."

That refers to the monetary policy. We all know that the Committee did not need to use such muffled language.

The Government tied themselves to the dogma of impractical theorists, they were taken over and they plunged the nation into wreckless industrial decline. The three years of unparalleled austerity, so ably predicted by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), meant the foreseeable and unnecessary assassination of thousands of viable companies which were liquidated by this spasm. The money supply was the touchstone, and the exchange rate, as the Committee reports, was not even mentioned in the early Red Books in which the basic philosophies of this Government were laid down.

But now the Chancellor has learnt that the exchange rate is extremely important. It lies at the heart of our economic management and it is the critical test of his Chancellorship. Getting it right will determine the balance of payments, the advance of exports, the deterrence of imports and the relationship of our economy to the world at large. It determines the outcome of more than anything else that the Chancellor can do. As I said on a previous occasion, it represents the maximum of his power and influence.

If one wanted power, one might well ask for the power to determine the exchange rate, giving the Chancellor everything else. The international effect of that kind of control is massive. The exchange rate is the precursor of future trade patterns. It determines the level of the order books of our most important industries, it affects the level of unemployment and jobs, and it anticipates the real level of industrial prosperity.

The Prime Minister, who is rather more relaxed about the pound going up or down in response to market forces, may recall what went wrong between 1979 and 1981. The pound went up sharply and it came down sharply and we paid an enormous price. By the time the exchange rate had come down again one third of the firms in my constituency had closed their doors. I am sorry to return to this, but I have to bring it into most of my speeches because it has had the greatest impact on my constituency in my 24 years of representing the people there.

That also caused my greatest political wretchedness. We do not have any large firms in my constituency. They are typically medium-sized firms which employ between 40

and 80 people. They are valuable firms doing jobs for—example, engineering or mid-tech—such as one sees in every country, however advanced their economy. The danger is that what we are doing now is similar to what caused that disaster, although with a lesser effect.

It is important to understand that in the end our prosperity depends largely on our manufacturing industry. The trouble is that in discussing so many economic matters we need agreement in the whole House on certain essentials. We want at least to agree on the structures of our taxes. The rates will always cause divisions between us. There is some agreement. We have not changed the basic structure of income tax, except for higher rates just recently, and we all agree that income tax should play an important part, although we disagree, of course, on the levels of tax.

What worries me, however, is that there is no agreement on manufacturing industry. We believe that there should be some incentives to manufacturing industry, because it is the basis of our prosperity. The Conservative party does not believe that; far from it. So we find ourselves altering the pattern of our relationship to manufacturing industry, depending on which party is in power. We need a consensus on certain aspects of our economy. By all means let us change rates of tax and certain attitudes that apply in these matters, but there should be certain minimum areas of agreement.

As I have said, I believe that our prosperity depends in the end on our manufacturing industry. The idea that the service sector alone can provide us with a high and expanding standard of living is a fool's dream. The service sector has too often been hailed as the indicator of the sophisticated, advanced economy of the future. I read an important article the other day in the *Siemens Review*—that is the big electrical engineering firm. The article was called "The myth of the post-industrial economy" and it pointed out that most celebrations of the shift from industry to services compare this shift with that from agriculture to industry. But what has happened with agriculture is not that we produce less than we did 40 years ago but that we produce with fewer people. We have become more efficient; we are producing more and importing a smaller proportion.

What we are seeing in manufacturing, however, is a replacement of our industry by imports from our competitors. The next stage in the development of our economy needs to be not a movement away from manufacturing industry as a total of the amount produced and its replacement by the service sector, but the increasing efficiency of our manufacturing sector. Then the surplus labour needs to be going into more productive areas of activity. The decline in manufacturing is leading to two things: the servicing, in the widest sense, of the products of a relatively diminishing manufacturing sector, and unemployment.

It is no accident that the success of the two powerful economies of the world, those of Germany and Japan, is due to their manufacturing dominance. Nor is it an accident that the emerging nations which are successful, particularly in the far east, owe their success also to their industries. None of the countries that I have mentioned has such a dominant service sector as we have.

Much of the distortion of our economy is due to the centralisation of our industry here in London. We are an extraordinarily centralised country as far as our industries are concerned. In 1969 I went to the various regions of the country to look at manufacturing industry and industry generally. I went all over the country—Scotland the north-east, the north-west, the south-east, and so on. I took as my guide *The Times* top 100 companies in Britain.

To my surprise then, and to my surprise now, 95 of the top 100 companies had their headquarters in London. That is astonishing centralisation and a complete distortion. In America, 29 of the top 100 companies have their headquarters in New York. In Germany, the top companies are scattered all over the place. Even in France they are scattered. Here, even the Distillers Company, with its business in whisky in particular, has its headquarters in London. The National Coal Board has its headquarters in London.

This creates an enormous distortion. It means that things are seen from the London aspect, and particularly from the City of London aspect. I am not decrying the City of London, but it takes too high a proportion of the ability that we have in this country, and this has a distorting effect. I believe that some of the distortion is caused by our having so much of our wealth abroad. Dividends are obtained on it and it is a valuable asset, but we must be aware of the distortion it creates.

I had responsibility 14 years ago, when I was in charge of the Civil Service Department, as it then was, for the dispersion of civil servants throughout the country. I had a scheme, in accordance with the Hardman report, for sending 30,000 civil servants to various parts of the country. I believe that that was enormously important. If centres of ability, power and influence are scattered all over the country, there will be a rather different regional approach. And if we get some of the big industries to have their headquarters outside the capital, there will be a better regional balance.

Increasing house prices are a serious matter. It is worrying that the Government have not acted to control or delay their effect or to impede it. Indeed, they have added fuel to the fire again and again. This was true of previous Governments—and it is even more true of the present Government. Home ownership has the advantages of capital gains tax, inheritance tax, absence of schedule A, mortgage relief and now the poll tax. A property-owning democracy is becoming an over-housed upper end of the market, where people join the helter-skelter to move into more and more unjustifiably expensive houses; and, because prices rise so rapidly, it is held that interest rates must also be high to dampen the rise. So we are having an argument for increasing interest rates because of the serious situation caused by the money going into housing.

This will have its effect on manufacturing industry, which will pay the price for this great trading-up process in housing. The housing ladder has now become a speeding escalator through which great damage is being caused. There is ever-increasing investment in housing—investment that should be going into industry. Interest rates are being pushed up to counter inflation, whereas they should be brought down to assist industry.

I am very sorry indeed that the highest level of income tax has been brought down to 40 per cent. I am really outraged that the difference in the taxation levels of the person near the bottom and the person at the top has been so narrowed. Twenty-five per cent. plus 9 per cent. national insurance contribution makes 34 per cent. If one is starting to pay tax, one pays 34 per cent., and if one is at the top one pays 40 per cent. This is an incredible

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

compression of the difference between the tax of the lower paid and the tax of the highest paid. The progressive tax system has been nearly eliminated.

When I asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury a question recently, he pointed out how much more tax those with large incomes paid. But, if there were one rate of tax for everybody, that would still be true—but it would not be a progressive tax system, and all previous Governments have accepted the need for such a system. When the income tax system was brought in 200 years ago, it was based on the idea that there should be some relief for those at the bottom and some sort of progression was later adopted. This reached its conclusion in the surtax levels introduced at the beginning of this century. Up to the 1950s there were three rates of tax at the lower level before one came on to the full standard rate as it was then, and there were several rates above that. Now we have 34 per cent. for most people and 40 per cent. for the rest, whatever the income may be. I find it quite impossible to understand how anyone can accept this.

The progressive tax system was not the prerogative of the Labour party. It was confirmed by Conservative Government after Conservative Government. We used to argue it, and we still do, as an egalitarian necessity. Conservatives used to argue it on the basis that it is right that the broadest backs should bear the greatest burdens. All these arguments seem to have gone and the great principle of a fair tax system covering all the people in the country is being thrown out. This is one further measure of the extremes to which the Government have gone. It is a great pity for all parties, and a great pity particularly for the House of Commons if it passes this legislation and a great misfortune for the people who will have to bear these burdens.

5.59 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I am sure the whole House will agree that stability in exchange rates is highly desirable for the economy, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman overplayed the difference which he tried to imply there was between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The right hon. Gentleman believes that the future prosperity of the country depends upon manufacturing industry. I do not think that everyone would go along with him on that. I am not suggesting for one moment that our economy could be based only on service industry, but service industry contributes about £600 million a month to our balance of payments. Does it matter whether the country gets $1 in foreign exchange for a manufactured item or $1 for a service item? There is no difference: it is still the same dollar.

Of course manufacturing is important but we must consider the underlying reason why we have ceased to have manufacturing industry. Because of overmanning we could not compete. It is no good Opposition Members shaking their heads. They know that that is true. How is it that we are producing more steel today with half the labour force that we used to have? That is proof positive of what I have said.

If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) were in the House, I am sure that he would agree that his speech was one more of envy than of content. It is rich for anyone on the Front Bench of such a high-tech party, with the policy which eventually led it to the International Monetary Fund, to criticise anything that we do.

I welcome the strategy in the Budget, which is a continuation of our strategy since 1979. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been congratulated many times by my hon. Friends. He performed a hat trick in the Budget. He got taxes down: he got public expenditure on the National Health Service, education and all the rest up, and he repaid part of the national debt. He achieved those three things in his Budget.

Consequently, we realise that what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said about high taxes producing higher revenue is a fallacy. In 1978-79 the top rate of tax was 98 per cent.; it was 83 per cent. on so-called earned income and 15 per cent. on investment income. In 1978-79, 24 per cent. of all the income tax collected came from 5 per cent. of taxpayers paying the top rate of tax. In 1988-89, we will have a top tax rate of 40 per cent. The same 5 per cent. of taxpayers will pay 28 per cent. of the total income tax take. No one can refute these arguments. Consequently, it is a fallacy to think that high taxes produce extra revenue. They do not. In fact, they kill initiative, and down goes our productivity and competitiveness.

The critics of the Budget originally referred to nurses' pay, but they seem to have dropped that. In an excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) mentioned the £1·1 billion extra which the Health Service will get next year. In that there must have been some estimate for what nurses would get in their pay review. I do not know what it was—perhaps 4 per cent. or 5 per cent.—but the nurses got just over 15 per cent. on average, with some getting more and some less.

If in the £1·1 billion 4 per cent., say, was allocated for an increase in nurses' pay, that meant that someone had to find the extra money. It is not the Chancellor. I wish people would stop saying that the Government are keeping the money back, that the Government are not doing this and that the Chancellor is not spending the money which he has got. Everyone should remember that it is the taxpayers' money we are talking about. To fund fully the increase in nurses' pay the Government will have to find £600 million, £500 million or whatever, but I remind the House that in the Budget the Chancellor had a contingency reserve of £3·5 billion. It is sufficient for him to fund whatever increase the pay review body recommended.

When we came into office, the top rate of tax was 98 per cent. and the standard rate was 33 per cent. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) cut the top rate to 60 per cent. Subsequently the standard rate came down to 27 per cent. Now the standard rate is 25 per cent. and the top rate is 40 per cent. I welcome those rates of tax.

I welcome too the change in capital gains tax. As everyone knew, it was a tax on inflation. Indexation since 1982 has been welcome. Under the Labour party, inflation went up to 26 per cent. or 28 per cent. Indexation from 1982 did not take account of the inflationary build-up until 1982. Now we have a change, with the 1982 value being used for capital gains tax purposes, which meets some of the criticism of a tax on inflation.

Mr. Battle: How does the hon. Gentleman explain that taxes as a share of national income have risen from 34 per cent. to 38 per cent., if we take the fact that income tax is down but taxes on spending have gone up? How does he explain that poorer households pay almost one quarter of their income in indirect taxation, whereas richer households pay only 16 per cent?

Sir William Clark: If a household is earning more money, it will probably live better, but it is a fallacy to suggest that if a household with a low income pays 25 per cent. in indirect taxation, a household with double that income will necessarily spend 25 per cent. as well. It depends on what the hon. Gentleman is taking 25 per cent. of.

That brings me to the next point. It is wrong to suggest that cutting the income tax rate will reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Cutting tax rates will not necessarily help the poor. It did not help when the Labour party was in power and the so-called rich were paying 98 per cent. tax.

Reference has been made to charities. I watched the television programme on Sunday. It is wrong for the Opposition to say that my right hon. Friend said that people should have recourse to charity. *[Interruption.]* He did not say that at all. Opposition Members should get a video of the programme and they will find that he did not. I thought that he was interviewed by a hostile person. All my right hon. Friend said was that he was helping charities, and that is a good thing.

There have been accusations about privatisation. Privatisation is not meant to balance the budget. Of course it helps, but the idea is to spread the wealth of the nation. I remind Opposition Members who grin at that remark that in 1979, when we came to power, there were 2·75 million shareholders; I am not talking about rich institutions. Today there are nearly 9·75 million shareholders. That shows the turnround in our economic fortunes. The Labour party does not realise what has happened. *[Laughter.]* It is no good Opposition Members laughing. This is a distribution of wealth. This is what we want to do. The trouble with capitalism is that there are far too few capitalists.

Thank goodness that, since 1979, we have increased the number of capitalists in this country. In addition, two families out of three now own the house in which they live. That is a complete turnround in the economic fortunes of this country.

I welcome the landmark in 1990 of separate assessment for husband and wife. That will not be easy. If there are to be no losers, we must add the single allowance to the married allowance. That is what a married couple receive at present, if both husband and wife work. If there is to be a single allowance for each partner, and to avoid anyone losing, the allowance should be raised to £3,350. At present, the single allowance plus the married allowance add up to £6,700 for a working couple. At today's figures, that change will cost the Exchequer about £5·4 billion.

Mr. Beith: Leaving aside the question of transitional provision so that there are no immediate losers, what does the hon. Gentleman think is the logic of indefinitely providing an additional allowance to a married couple, both of whom are earning? What is the logic of providing them with a greater allowance than two people would otherwise have?

Sir William Clark: For a married couple, both of whom are working, not to lose, we must provide them with a single allowance of £3,350. It will help the married couple in those cases where only one person is working. It means that the tax threshold is that much higher. It will take more people out of the tax bracket and provide privacy between the spouses.

The other landmark that I welcome in the Budget is the target of 20p in the pound, but the real success is the management of the economy, particularly in respect of the public sector borrowing requirement. Next year we shall have a negative PSBR balance. I remind the House that, during the previous regime, the average PSBR overspending as a percentage of the gross domestic product was 6·75 per cent. The average since we have been in power has been 2·75 per cent. Next year and the year after, it will be a minus percentage. As has been mentioned, the 25 per cent. rate has been a great help to business, particularly small businesses.

I wish to draw my hon. Friend's attention to the present burden on industry. We must alleviate the burden on industry, particularly the service industries, of the phenomenal number of regulations in the Financial Services Act 1986, which are expensive to operate. Let us take, for example, any small company that employs 50 or 100 people. In addition to the burden of collecting PAYE and filling in the associated forms, there is now form P11(D) which lists the various perks that an employee may obtain. In such cases, an employee is defined as a director —I accept that; it means that he is in a different bracket —or any employee earning more than £8,500 a year, including any perks that he may obtain.

The average wage is now about £200 a week. If one indexed the £8,500 figure, which was fixed in 1978, up to 1988 figures, it should be £18,200. I believe that the minimum figure for an employee should be increased. It would relieve the burden of many employers in respect of form P11(D). I remind my right hon. Friend that, recently, the EETPU did a deal with employers, so that all its members would have their BUPA subscription paid by the employer, although it would then have to go on form P11(D).

Most economic pundits, including the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors, agree that the economy is in good heart. Wage rates may be becoming too high, the estimate for production may be just a little too optimistic but, if one takes the economy as a whole, one can see that unemployment and inflation are coming down and that the reserves are excellent.

I remind those Opposition Members who criticise us about the balance of payments deficit of £1·5 billion, £2 billion or £3 billion that our reserves are at present £143 billion and that that deficit is quite sustainable on our overseas balance of payments. I remind the House that, when the Labour Government were in power, they had a massive deficit each year on their balance of payments. Since 1979, even taking into account last year's deficit of £1·5 billion to £2 billion, the total surplus of our balance of payments adds up to £20 billion. That is rather different from the deficit left by the Opposition.

The only thing that could upset our economic progress would be if we were to adopt the policy advocated by the Labour party. Our policy is working. We have been steadfast in our policy and in no circumstances should we

[Sir William Clark]

change it because that would be disastrous. If we maintain our present policy, the 20p in the pound target and further prosperity is in sight during this Parliament.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We have not yet had a speech shorter than 18 minutes. The House might appreciate rather shorter speeches.

6.17 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I shall try to comply with your request, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I should like to comment on one point raised by the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), which has also been mentioned by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), in respect of the Government's increased expenditure on the National Health Service. The Government have increased expenditure, but the right hon. Member for Worthing, above all, should have had recourse to the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which he chairs, and on which I serve, and which report preceded that which features in today's discussions. In that report we pointed out how difficult it is to use those figures, because the effects of inflation, both in general and in the specific form in which it hits the National Health Service, have to be taken into account.

It is true that the Government have provided additional resources for the NHS, but those resources do not keep pace with the effects of inflation on the NHS, or even with general inflation. If we take general inflation into account, it leaves the Health Service with only a little over 1 per cent. extra, but, if we take into account the relatively higher rate of inflation which affects the NHS, we discover that that leaves the NHS with, in real terms, fewer resources than it had before, with which it has to deal with a growing range of problems, not the least of which is the increased number of people having recourse to its facilities.

The Committee has considered in detail the impact of inflation on the NHS. It is now recognised that it is a much wider issue than the general comments by the Government about increased funding suggest.

Sir William Clark: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, since 1979, in real terms, the amount of money allocated to the NHS has gone up by 30 per cent.?

Mr. Beith: Yes. That disappears quickly, if we consider the increase in demand for the Health Service in line with the population increase, especially in the groups most likely to make use of the NHS, and the relatively higher prices in the NHS. It was this Government who came before the House with proposals for increased prescription charges, which were justified on the basis that the cost of prescriptions—one of the items in the Health Service budget—was increasing faster than costs in the economy generally. There is now a more widely recognised problem, and it means that one cannot just bandy general figures on the Government's Health Service record.

Dr. Marek: We are also getting older as a nation and we demand more money spent on the NHS. People have paid their taxes and deserve to be looked after in their old age. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the family practitioner committee section of the Health Service is not cash-limited and that an increase above the average places an even more unfair burden on the hospital and community health sector?

Mr. Beith: That is a fair point. However, I must stop these digressions, or I shall fail to meet the requirement that you have set for me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Finance (No. 2) Bill incorporates a Budget strategy which is unfair, unsound and far from reforming. We must set it against a background of mounting confusion over who is in charge of economic policy. There was a stage when it seemed that the Chancellor could not put his head around the door of No. 10 Downing street for fear that the Prime Minister would bellow at him because of his latest act of intervention on the exchange rate.

The Chancellor has made some attempt to reassert his position, and it was noticeable in his radio interview on Sunday. I noted not so much what he said about charity as what he said about the undesirability of public comment by Ministers on exchange rate policy, which I presume was aimed not only at the Prime Minister but at other Ministers. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is not averse to getting off a train in Manchester and making a few well-publicised comments on the exchange rate over breakfast.

If the Chancellor is to be put in charge, so much the better. Nevertheless, it was perhaps too much to expect the whole Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee to agree with my amendment to the effect that it was

"unsatisfactory that the Chancellor should not . . . be wholly in charge of . . . exchange rate policy."

I suspect that, even though all members of the Committee did not vote for my amendment, many shared that view.

Quite apart from the general advantages of having the Chancellor, rather than other Ministers, in charge of Britain's economic policy, the right hon. Gentleman appeared to take the more widely supported view—that use of exchange rate policy as the primary instrument to control inflation was likely to have unacceptable consequences and that one had to have regard to the effect of exchange rates on industry. As the Select Committee has pointed out, there is no reason to assume that a stable exchange rate brings about an ineffective climate of inflation control.

Some doubt can be cast on how effective exchange rate measures are in inducing companies to take a particular line with wage settlements, as beyond any doubt is the fact that a continuing high pound causes severe problems for manufacturing and exporting industry, of the kind to which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) referred. Successful manufacturing and exporting industries and successful service industries producing export earnings do not want an unrealistically high pound, and that factor must be a consideration in exchange rate policy.

Matters of disagreement run wider than those aspects. In taking evidence from the Chancellor, I sought to elucidate the Government's view on Britain's entry to the European monetary system. The idea that the Government are waiting to enter when the time is right is a ludicrous myth which should be exploded. The Government are divided on this matter.

It is not wholly dishonourable to be divided; in fact, the Select Committee was fascinatingly divided on this point. When I sought to secure a vote in favour of early entry, I had the support of the hon. Member for Durham, North

(Mr. Radice), although one other Labour Member abstained and a third Labour Member voted against me, along with no fewer than three different wings of the Conservative section of the Committee.

That illustrates the widespread division. Those most concerned with economic policy, including the Chancellor, wish that Britain could soon be brought into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, not least in time for our conclusion of the internal market.

There are other aspects on which there seems to be some division of policy, not least on the relative acceptability of inflation at about 3 per cent. At times, the Chancellor has appeared to believe that inflation at that level is probably preferable to the measures that would have to be used to drive it down below that level. It is not that it is not desirable to have inflation at that level but that the measures which might have to be used to bring it down further could be more painful and damaging than if inflation persisted at that level for a time.

The Select Committee pointed out that the Government's inflation targets have slipped badly. It is for the Government to say what they regard as acceptable measures to reach their ultimate aim of zero inflation and to say whether they include measures that could severely damage industry and growth.

The repeated message from the Budget has been its unfairness, and that message has been compounded by the effects of other measures which we have been discussing at about the same time—social security and the poll tax. When Conservative Members talk about the importance of having a no-losers approach to some of these problems —referring to the ways in which arrangements for taxation of married couples are designed to avoid creating losers —if makes us wonder why a no-losers approach was not taken to some aspects of the social security measures.

One example has been brought home to me by numerous people who have been to my constituency surgeries. Miners' widows, who receive a cash allowance in lieu of concessionary coal, because they cannot burn coal in their homes, face substantial rent increases. They will lose benefit because of the social security measures. There is no no-losers provision for them. There was no no-losers provision for the people who had saved up their mobility allowance to buy an adapted car. They have found that they have gone over the £6,000 limit and have become losers. No transitional protection was provided for them.

No transitional protection was provided for the family with a 19-year-old at school completing A-levels who had been ill for some of the time in which he would normally have completed the examinations. Because of the change in the rules, the family cannot get benefit. As a result, it will be £20 a week worse off. The no-losers doctrine did not seem to apply to those people.

As well as the manifest and widely felt unfairness of the Budget's tax cut provisions, it is striking that the Budget continued to preserve those tax breaks and benefits to the wealthiest in society, which they should not need if they were getting all the benefits of tax cuts. One of the classic examples to which reference is made in the Select Committee's report, in a different context, is mortgage interest tax relief at above the standard rate of tax.

I still cannot understand the Government's logic for arguing that, with rising house prices, it is necessary to give those who can most easily to afford to buy a house—by definition, because they are on the higher tax rates—a higher rate of subsidy to take out a mortgage than those on standard rates of tax. I should be grateful if the Government can explain that. The argument for it is wholly political. It does not emanate from the Treasury. Like the exchange rate policy demands, it emanates from No. 10. The Prime Minister has concluded that she wishes to retain the support of this group, but there seems to be no logic in it, and it adds to the Budget's unfairness.

Similar criticism can be made of the reform of the taxation of married women. It will give the largest advantage to the wealthy two-earner couple opting for separate taxation. Such a couple will benefit from the disaggregation of their incomes—together they would be in the higher rate tax bracket, but separately would each be in a lower rate—and they will get the additional married couple's allowance. A massive benefit is flowing to a relatively wealthy group. It is difficult to argue that this produces any kind of fair Budget strategy, even in the context of a part of the Budget in which everyone agrees that some kind of reform is necessary.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why a married women who is better off is less entitled to her independence than a married women who is less well off? Is not the basic principle behind the reform that of giving dignity and independence to married women, whatever their income?

Mr. Beith: I do not disagree with that at all, but perhaps the hon. Lady can explain to me what the hon. Member for Croydon, South failed to explain; why such a married woman needs to be in receipt of a married couple's allowance—as one of a couple. One can see why, in the short term, we do not want to make losers of such couples, but why there should be an additional allowance for a married couple indefinitely into the future I cannot understand. I cannot see that it serves to increase the independence of married women. That independence is secured by ensuring that they have separate taxation.

Another area in which the Government have preserved massive unfairness and have not carried out the reforms that would seem natural and logical is national insurance contributions. People earning between £100 and £300 a week pay 34 per cent. of their income in tax and national insurance contributions, but those earning between £300 and £450 a week pay only 25 per cent. of their income. The Government's failure to tackle this mess is another illustration of the fact that the Budget is not only unfair, but is also not a reforming budget.

Shortly after the Budget, the Chancellor said that he had more or less completed his task of reforming personal taxation. If he thinks that, he does not deserve to be credited even with the ambition of being a reforming Chancellor, let alone with having achieved it. Apart from the things that I have mentioned already, he has done nothing to move towards a tax benefit system on tax credit lines, for which previous Conservative Chancellors have argued. He has not tackled one of the greatest weaknesses of the present inheritance tax system. His changes do not encourage a wider dispersal of wealth, which an accessions tax could do.

The Budget was unsound because it ignored some dangers to the economic growth and security that the Government are trying to develop. It ignored the danger to the balance of payments of a substantial increase in private consumption, and did so at a time when there was an

[Mr. Beith]

obvious need for some increased expenditure in parts of the public services on which large sections of society depend.

It was unacceptable that the Chancellor could say at the time of the Budget that things had turned out much better than he had expected, that he had more revenue at his disposal than he had thought and that he would therefore give more favourable tax reductions than he had planned. Yet he felt himself precluded from saying that, because things had turned out better than he had expected, he proposed to divide what was available to him between further tax cuts and benefits to various public services in need of assistance. He argued in this way because the public expenditure White Paper was published in November.

The Treasury Select Committee tried to put forward one way in which to get over this difficulty. Where there's a will there's a way, and the Chancellor was not really precluded, in the certain knowledge that he has far greater means at his disposal, from disbursing some of these means to urgent needs in the public service——

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I said at the outset that I would try to keep to Mr. Deputy Speaker's injunction.

The Budget is also profoundly worrying on the issue of inflation. The Government have not helped their own case by imposing on nationalised industries price rises that they did not regard as necessary and which bear heavily on some sections of the community. In a number of areas of the economy the Government seem to be fuelling the very inflation that they believe they should be trying to control. I mentioned the example of mortgage tax relief. In the course of this year, there will be not only the continuing effects of higher rate mortgage tax relief but the short-term push to house prices, particularly in London, from the changes that the Government are making in the multiple tax relief on a single property—changes for which I accept there is justification. Nevertheless, the alteration will fuel price increases.

Other parts of the Finance Bill deserve considerable examination in Committee and show that the Government seem to have failed to take the steps they should have taken. It is impossible to understand why the Government should seek to allow the real price of alcohol to fall year by year. That is particularly true of spirits, on which the Government have imposed no increase. It is difficult to square that with the activities of the Leader of the House in his ministerial committee on alcohol policy. The proposal on low-alcohol drinks in the Budget was meant to be a gesture towards that ministerial activity, by trying to get a concerted policy on alcohol. It is difficult to see the logic in that, given that the Government believe that alcohol consumption needs to be reduced or controlled —so why reduce its real price year by year?

Although we share the Government's objective of wider share ownership, I continue to argue that the Government maintain a hopelessly inadequate personal equity plan scheme. They could have reformed it in the Budget if they had wanted to. It does not draw in new investors to any significant extent. Its main attraction is to those who have used up their other tax reliefs and want the additional tax relief that the scheme offers. It is not a great attraction to investors.

There will be a great deal of examination of the business expansion scheme proposals on rented housing. There is no reason in principle why the Government should not take steps to encourage private capital into housing. With the problem as desperate as the housing problem now is —and it had got worse—we should be foolish as a nation if we did not try to attract private capital into the solution of the problem. But there are serious worries about the scheme. It is difficult to argue that relief at the higher tax rates is necessary for an investment that is primarily in property, which gives considerable security. It is difficult to imagine that the investment could be secured only by having tax relief at the higher rates.

Secondly, it is worrying that the whole scheme must be geared to the Government's new assured tenancies with no additional protection for the levels of rent charged or against any of the other worries that tenants have. It looks as if, without some modification to the scheme, it could attract capital into unsatisfactory forms of rented housing, in which the tenant is exploited. If that happened, it would be an unfortunate step to take at a time when the housing crisis is so severe.

Many people in this country want an enterprising society with a fair tax and benefit system and good quality public services. It is essential to have all those things, but they are not all provided by the Budget's strategy. Take, for example, good quality public services. It is an insult to the nurses to imply, as the Chief Secretary did, that by providing a much better pay increase for them than that of previous years, and fully funding it, the Government have dealt with the whole of their grievance. Many nurses took to the streets in orderly demonstrations in their own time not only because they were worried about nurses' pay but because they were worried about the state of the Health Service.

I have found, during my visits to hospitals, that I am much more likely to be challenged and questioned by nurses about the level of staffing in the wards and their back-up in the job than about nurses' pay. I have had far more queries from nurses about the standard of service that they can give than about their own pay. That is a sign of their dedication and professionalism.

Because it fails to meet the needs of social justice and decent public services, this Finance Bill will take the people of this country further from, not nearer to, the objective of a successful society with social justice and good public services. Inequity gives enterprise a bad name. That is tragic. It is vital to get across the fact that the benefits that we need to bring to those who are worse off in society cannot be achieved if society is not successful economically. But what is the point of economic success if it is not accompanied by an attempt to tackle those social problems?

If an advertising agency had been hired to tell the Government how to get their message across, it would have told them to repeat it day by day in a similar form. That is what the Government have done. On day one, they gave us a Budget which expressed a message of unfairness. On day two, they gave us the social security changes, which bring home in harsh terms to many hundreds of thousands of people the Government's message of unfairness. On day three, they brought before the House a poll tax, which is perhaps the unfairest tax devised for

centuries. The message has got home. It is a sad message for a society which has an opportunity to combine success with social justice.

6.39 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The House will be glad to learn that I do not propose to detain it for 22 minutes.

The continuing simplification of the taxation system is an extremely important part of the Bill. The simplification is to everyone's benefit. If the minutiae of the tax system become complicated, as they have, the whole system becomes incomprehensible to the ordinary person. Any change makes the whole edifice quiver as changes in one part of the system have a knock-on effect in others. When the structure becomes so complex, the only people to benefit are tax accountants who are paid vast sums to unravel what legislation has created. The changes embodied in the Bill are therefore much to be welcomed, except, possibly, by tax accountants.

We have already heard about the scandal of wives and husbands being taxed together and husbands being responsible for their wives' tax returns. I do not want to get involved in the argument about whether the allocation of allowances benefits or disadvantages certain groups. One tremendous advantage of the proposed change is that it creates no losers. I should like to dwell for a moment, however, on the natural justice of the change.

It seems to me axiomatic that a husband should not be responsible for his wife's tax return. I should like to give a personal illustration. My wife is rather better educated than me. She has a master of business administration qualification from one of the best business schools in Europe, she earns her own living, she is responsible for a great many other people's lives and she has much more financial responsibility than any mere Back Bencher could dream to aspire to. In short, she has all the qualifications to be able to sign my tax return, knowing far better than me what is in it. Instead, since we have been married, I have had to say that what she has written in the tax return is correct.

That is ludicrous. It is to me that the Inland Revenue has turned for assurances that we are doing everything properly. It is a monstrous system. Indeed, it is an insult to my wife. It is ludicrous and the change goes a long way towards remedying it.

One matter disturbs me, however. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury mentioned it and I know that we shall return to it. I refer to the married couple's allowance being given to the husband and the couple being unable to opt for who should take it. In many cases, no serious injustice will occur, but if a wife's marginal rate of tax is 40 per cent. and the husband's is 25 per cent., the couple will unquestionably lose out as compared with a couple in the reverse situation. That is obviously unjust, and I should like the anomaly to be ironed out, although not perhaps this year because of the cost. Husbands and wives should be taxed independently.

I greatly welcome the change in the structure for payments in kind. I greatly welcome the raised tax charge for company cars. I would like it to go further. I would like tax scales raised to the point at which an employee is indifferent as to whether he is paid in cash or with a motor car. I should like that principle applied to every other benefit in kind.

I cannot believe that it is right, or to the advantage of employer or employee, for work done to be paid for in goods rather than money. As long as the tax system enables employees to benefit distinctly from having a car rather than cash, we shall prolong a distortion in the financial system which is greatly to be regretted.

There should be no benefit to employers paying other than in cash and employees should want to resist being paid any way other than in cash. The tax system has a great responsibility to iron out those problems. We have not yet got there with the motor car, because the scale bands are too low and because of the effects of national insurance on the employees' side of the bargain. When an employee is below the national insurance limit, it is to the employer's benefit to pay with a motor car rather than with cash.

We should have a tax system which is neutral about how people are paid. We are on the way, and I greatly welcome it. The 40 per cent. band will help in that direction. I should like to echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) said. We have lived for a long time with the £8,500 limit for higher paid employees. That limit is, with a simpler tax system, unjustified. Relieving people of the need to complete a form P11(D) and a tax return each year will save much administrative time among employers, the Inland Revenue and employees. I hope that that improvement can be made soon.

My hon. Friend said that the limit should be close to £20,000. A more modest rise would achieve a major benefit. It is quite wrong, however, that people who earn less than £10,000 a year should have to go through so much administration with tax returns.

Because of the simplification which it proposes, I strongly welcome the Bill. I also welcome the greater financial strategy. Simplification, however, is of the essence.

6.49 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. I begin by referring to the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on the Budget.

As a new member of the Committee, I was surprised to find that traditionally the Budget report of the Committee deals with the economic context of the Budget and not with the specific measures that involve taxation. However, I realise that those details are dealt with in the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill, which will begin its work shortly. As a result, the Select Committee's report deals with the less controversial elements of the Budget.

However, one controversy which surfaced in the Select Committee was the dispute between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister about exchange rate policy. I do not apologise for putting that in personality terms. It is alarming when the Prime Minister and a senior member of the Government are seen to be at odds over such a fundamental aspect of our economy. There were discussions in the Select Committee about the over-simplified and misleading words, "You can't buck the market." The Committee looked at ways in which the market might be bucked.

I was glad that the Committee expressed concern about the effect of a high pound on industry. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr.

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Sheldon), I remember the period between 1979 and 1982 when the pound was artificially high. In the European Parliament constituency of South Tyne and Wear, which I then represented, many jobs were lost and many industries disappeared completely.

We know that markets are not always rational in their views about the health of particular currencies at particular times. The Chancellor himself has been quoted as saying that very often the market is not reflecting economic fundamentals at all. We do not want British industry to be further undermined by an artificially high pound or by irrational speculative behaviour.

The report of the Select Committee deals with many other useful matters, in particular the concern of many hon. Members about our worsening balance of payments. It seems that the Treasury has estimated a deficit on the balance of payments this year of some £4 billion. Yet in the first two months of the year there was a deficit of £1·5 billion. If the Treasury forecasts are to be realised, there will have to be a dramatic improvement in the situation.

The Committee also expressed fear of a consumer boom sucking in imports, and the fear of adding to the already great burden of personal debt which may be encouraged by some of the tax reductions.

However, as I have said, the Committee report, by its very nature, does not get to grips with the real controversies and passions aroused by the Budget. It is the most unpopular and contentious Budget in recent times because of the tax reductions, and in particular the unjustifiable reduction in the top rate of tax to 40 per cent. and the allied measures which represent a dramatic shift in the distribution of wealth from the poor to the rich.

It has been pointed out many times that the Chancellor had an embarrassment of riches at his disposal. Unfortunately, he used it to embarrass the rich with his generosity—at least, he will have caused embarrassment to any rich person with even the faintest stirring of a social conscience.

Why did the right hon. Gentleman do that? One argument is that it will be an incentive and that somehow the cuts in the top rate will cause people to work harder. That argument ignores the findings of Professor Brown of Stirling university, a copy of which should be distributed to all hon. Members. It ignores, too, the evidence from Japan and from other countries where there are high top rates of taxation. It also ignores the fact that people often work because they are interested in their work. When I was a university lecturer, the salaries were not high, but many of my colleagues worked flat out for all the available hours, not because of the income they received but because they had a passionate interest in the subject in which they worked.

Another argument is that higher top rates of taxation encourage people to evade taxation. The argument is that most people seem to evade taxation. I do not know whether the Government are saying that the top people are uniquely dishonest, but I find that argument very unconvincing.

The consequences of the Budget measures are unequal in their effect. A financier earning £100,000 a year will gain an extra £4,000, a qualified nurse earning an average of £7,800 a year will benefit by just £26, or 50p a week, and a low-income worker on £90 a week will have his pay packet increased by only 27p.

The Low Pay Unit estimates that about 550,000 families caught in the poverty trap will face effective marginal tax rates of more than 70 per cent. due to the withdrawal of means-tested social benefits. It is absolutely vital that we look not only at the Budget measures but at their overall economic context. The benefit provisions have lagged very much behind the growth in incomes. That is absolutely clear if we consider pensions, child benefit and housing benefit. The hardships caused by the cuts in housing benefit will be highlighted effectively later this week.

A telling argument in *The Guardian* yesterday shows that the Treasury has managed to save £4 billion—just about the same figure as its privatisation receipts this year—by its niggardly and mean approach to benefits. That is disgraceful, especially when we know that money is available.

The word "unfairness" will be long associated with the Budget, but it will also be remembered for its short-sightedness and short-termism. The tax cuts will fuel imports at a time when public capital expenditure has been falling. Therefore, we have failed to lay the basis for the renewal of our infrastructure and of our industries which will be vital in future. The long-term bill for refusing to take the necessary action now will be very heavy indeed.

The Budget and the Finance Bill will be remembered for their unfairness and for their tragic short-termism. The Chancellor will be remembered not as a great reformer but as a wrecker and destroyer of the hopes of creating a fairer tax system properly related to ability to pay. He will be remembered as a destroyer of the hopes of creating conditions for genuine long-term economic prosperity in this country.

6.57 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I do not think that the Budget can sensibly be described as a short-term Budget as the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) sought to describe it. It is important to consider the Budget as one of a series, starting with the 1979 Budget, all of which sought to create the climate and conditions for long-term economic growth, for the improvement of Britain's economic performance and for the increase in industrial investment which is now happening.

The background to this debate is one of strong economic growth at a sustainable pace. It is not altogether surprising that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, did not devote much of his speech to the state of the economy today. Instead, rather uncharacteristically, he made a number of doubtful statistical assertions, including the extraordinary assertion that 18 million people in Britain are living in poverty. When questioned on that, he revealed that he was including children in his calculations of people on low incomes.

Mr. Battle: I am sure that the hon. Member will recall the debate on child benefit when the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) put a question to the Minister and received the reply that 18 million people in Britain live on or below the bread line. Is the hon. Gentleman disputing a fact given by his own Government?

Mr. Smith: The difficulty about assertions of poverty is that, every time the income support level is increased, we increase the level of poverty, so 18 million people are asserted to be living in relative poverty. If we compare their incomes 10 years ago under a Labour Government with their incomes today, we see that everybody is far better off. We should be looking for an absolute rather than a relative yardstick, because the Government are the victims of their own success. It is important that people should understand what is meant by poverty and that they should also understand that, year in, year out, the threshold is being raised as social security benefits are raised.

The second extraordinary assertion of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is that tax evasion is rising. He can have no evidence to support that statement, since nobody knows the size of the black economy. He probably meant that the Inland Revenue is now having considerably more success in detecting tax evasion, with the result that more tax revenue is now being received from people who formerly were part of the black economy. That is a very satisfactory state of affairs.

The third extraordinary statistical or factual assertion by the hon. Gentleman is that North sea oil revenue is rising. He is three, four or probably five years out of date. Anybody who looks at the Red Book can see that the income from petroleum revenue tax now forms only a very small proportion of total Government revenues.

The assertion that the background to this debate is a strong economy has widespread support. The Japanese ambassador told us so not so very long ago. Today the magazine *Fortune* has said the same. The CBI's industrial trend survey has reported today more good news from industry.

There is another report, also today, about the visit of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to the city of Leeds. The article explains that his tour coincides with new business confidence and continues:

"Economic pointers look favourable not only in Leeds, but over large areas of the Midlands and the North-West. There are real signs that those parts of the country that seemed left lagging by the booming South-east are beginning to share in the recovery."

Even the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said:

"The city is doing fairly well, with quite a bit of investment coming in."

The good news is that economic recovery is moving slowly north, through the midlands and now, as the hon. Gentleman told *The Times* today, to the city of Leeds.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for sending me a note saying that he intended to quote that passage from *The Times*. However, he will recognise that that was not an endorsement of the Government's economic policies. My argument in *The Times* and the one that I make in this place is that the success of Leeds is due largely to the partnership between the public and the private sector that has helped to refurbish and redevelop various sectors of the inner city. I suspect that the difference between us in this debate is about the role of the public sector. Leeds's Labour-controlled council has played a crucial part in stimulating inner city investment. Unfortunately for the hon. Gentleman, his problem is that that success comes from a cause that he finds it difficult ideologically to understand and appreciate—the role of local authorities.

Mr. Smith: I have no difficulty about that whatsoever. I am very glad to know that there is a sane Socialist authority in Leeds. There are sensible local authorities all over the country that have done a great deal to attract investment, including the one in which I live, the Conservative-controlled London borough of Wandsworth. News of that kind is obviously welcome to those who live and work in Leeds. I gave that only as an example of the way in which economic prosperity is making its way through the country.

The result of the successful economic management over which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has presided is substantially rising tax revenues. Buoyant tax revenues have enabled my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer at one and the same time not just to balance the Budget but to budget for a surplus and substantially to cut taxes.

The 25 per cent. standard rate of tax is most welcome and should not be underestimated. In the nine years since 1979, there has been a reduction of one quarter in the standard rate of income tax, from 33 per cent. to 25 per cent. Every taxpayer in the United Kingdom will benefit from the Budget. Of course there will be major beneficiaries of the reduction in the top rates of tax, but no Government should pursue a policy of penalising success. They should set a top tax rate that will ensure that revenue is maximised. We heard earlier that during the last nine years the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers paid a larger proportion of the total amount of income tax than was previously the case. I am sure that in two or three years that process will be repeated with the new top rate of tax.

There are, nevertheless, two aspects of the income tax changes that cause me concern. The first was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He said that the top rate of tax is now 40 per cent., that the marginal rate of tax, taking into account national insurance contributions, is now 34 per cent. and that the differential is too narrow. I agree. The Treasury should give the highest priority to reducing further the standard rate of income tax from 25 per cent. to whatever is seen, in all the circumstances, to be a reasonable figure. I was glad that in his Budget speech my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he intended to do that during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Dr. Marek: Does the hon. Gentleman intend to recommend to the Treasury that the national insurance contribution should run all the way up the income scale and that it should not be cut off arbitrarily halfway up it?

Mr. Smith: The difficulty about that proposal is that it would further undermine the contributory nature of the national insurance scheme, which it is important to retain. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that earnings-related pensions should rise by an equivalent amount, I might agree with him, but as I know that he is not suggesting that, I do not think it that would be a reasonable step to take. I hope that it will be possible soon to reduce the standard rate of income tax to the 20 per cent. target that has now been set.

My other concern about the income tax changes is the position of retired people who are able to take advantage of the age allowance but who find themselves in what is called the clawback area of income of between £9,000 and £11,000 when the age allowance is clawed back from them. The rate at which age allowance is clawed back is 41·6 per

[Mr. Smith]

cent. It is unfortunate that that rate of clawback should be higher than the top rate of tax. I hope that it will be possible to widen the income band from which the age allowance is clawed back, to ensure that, at the maximum, it is 40 per cent., and preferably less.

There are two changes in the Finance Bill that I particularly welcome. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred to changes in the business expansion scheme and mentioned that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer had decided to introduce a limit of £500,000 for any one company's investment in any one year and to introduce tax relief for business expansion scheme funds at the time when the cash is invested in the fund. Those two changes will do a great deal to focus tax relief on investment opportunities that involve a higher degree of risk.

Those who have taken advantage of this relief have naturally taken the least possible risk. However, if one is offering a substantial tax relief of that kind, it should be focused on riskier areas of investment where there may be an equity gap, which is in the £75,000 to £250,000 area. With that in mind, those two changes to the BES are particularly welcome and should do much to ensure that money is invested in riskier, high-tech projects.

The second change I wish to mention is that to chapter II of the Bill, relating to clause 79. I shall not go into detail, but I commend my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury for the manner in which those provisions were devised. There is always a degree of mutual suspicion between tax practitioners and the Inland Revenue, which is not surprising given that they have diametrically opposed objectives in life. However, my right hon. Friend went about making changes by setting up a working party that comprised representatives of the Inland Revenue and of taxpayers, which has had a most satisfactory outcome—something that is both workable and practicable.

The bottom line for the average taxpayer—my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) referred to this earlier—is whether or not he personally is better off. At Treasury Question Time the week before last, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), that the contrast between the performance of the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979 and that of the Conservative Government between 1979 and the present day was that a married man on average earnings with two children had seen a rise in his real take-home pay of one half of 1 per cent. in a five-year period. In the following nine-year period, the corresponding figure was 27·5 per cent.—55 times better. For as long as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is able to preside over the economy in such a way that we see continuing improved performance leading to rising tax revenues, falling tax rates and rising standards of living, we shall continue to have a Conservative Government that will be widely supported by all taxpayers. That is most welcome.

7.12 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): There is a general feeling that in the next 18 months to two years, this country will be faced with sharp economic difficulties, particularly arising from what is likely to happen in the United States after the presidential election. The Government boast about the recent growth in the economy, but manufacturing output has just about reached the level of 1979. The economy basically remains in a fragile state, but has been much boosted by consumer spending and by domestic credit expansion.

I shall concentrate my remarks on the changes in income tax to which the Bill gives effect. I am one of those who shouted, perhaps more than once, "Shame!" when the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his Budget speech and announced that the top rate of income tax would be reduced to 40 per cent. I believe that I was right to do so, and I offer no apologies.

The feelings of the Labour Benches on that development are undoubtedly shared by the majority of the people of this country. At a meeting with the Chancellor during the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, I asked him about the lack of popularity for that measure. He told me it was not designed to secure a response in the opinion polls. However, his decision doubtless received a positive response among the richest and most prosperous in the country.

At that same meeting on 30 March, I asked the Chancellor what he would say to a pensioner, no matter on whatever limited income, whose housing benefit had been withdrawn because of the new capital limit of £6,000. In view of the widespread stories in the press to the effect that Ministers are looking at that provision again, it is of some interest that the Chancellor fully justified the cut-off point for housing benefit. He said:

> "I think it is perfectly fair that somebody who has £6,000 or more of free capital—free capital"——

the emphasis on "free capital" is his—

> "should not be in receipt of housing benefit."

That view is not shared by many right hon. and hon. Members on the Conservative Back Benches. They know from their own surgeries, postbags and meetings with constituents how unpopular is that decision. It is nonsense that people who have saved during their lifetime—and at present-day levels, £6,000 does not add up to much, particularly if it includes redundancy pay—should be penalised by the Government and denied housing benefit. One compares that situation with the way in which the most prosperous members of the community will benefit.

A lead story in *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday, repeated in today's newspapers, reported that senior Ministers, including those from the Treasury, are hurrying around in an attempt to put together a package for our debate on housing benefit tomorrow that may not satisfy the Opposition but might at least satisfy their own Back Benchers. Tomorrow, we shall learn the outcome of those talks. I say to the Financial Secretary and to the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, both of whom are present, that if they believe that some modest tinkering with housing benefit will satisfy their Back Benchers and the rest of the country, they are wrong. Drastic changes need to be made to the arrangements for housing benefit, including those which penalise the many people—my own constituents among them—who have no savings.

One must compare the situation of others earning £150,000 a year, rather than having £6,000 capital or less and a modest retirement income. They will enjoy a total tax gain of £23,000—almost double the average earnings of male employees in this country. Someone earning £100,000 a year will gain more than £13,000. Half of all the

Budget tax cuts will go to the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers. Is there a single Conservative Member who really believes that substantial cuts in taxation will act as an incentive to the wealthy to work harder? Does anyone really believe that? Are we to believe that the most prosperous people in the country will now say to themselves, "I have not worked hard enough. I do not get out of bed early enough in the morning and put in enough working hours. But I will now work harder. I shall get up earlier and stay longer at the office before leaving for the golf course. I shall not take Fridays off because of the tax concessions"? To believe that people will think that way is to believe in a fantasy world.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that when the top rate of tax was 83 per cent., or 98 per cent. on unearned income, the people to whom he is referring spent most of their time trying to devise schemes to avoid paying tax? Today, they spend most of their time creating wealth.

Mr. Winnick: There is very little evidence that they are creating wealth. As to avoiding tax, the hon. Gentleman may be more expert in that field than I can claim to be. Like the poll tax, the purpose of the Budget tax cuts has nothing to do with incentives. Everyone, including Conservative Members, knows that to be true. Their purpose is simply to reward the rich: no more, and no less. It is understandable that, throughout the country, the Government are increasingly seen as being of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.

Those on small incomes, certainly our constituents outside London and probably those in the London area as well—people earning £5,000, £6,000 and £7,000 a year—will gain a very modest amount from the reductions in the standard rate of taxation. It should not be overlooked, moreover, that the amount that can be inherited will now be taxed at only 40 per cent. instead of 60 per cent., and it will be much easier to pass on substantial private fortunes. There will be further tax loopholes to assist the wealthiest.

In my view, the rich should pay a much higher rate than 40 per cent. When I pressed the Chancellor on the subject in Committee, I asked a simple question: could he name the European countries in which the top rate of tax is 40 per cent? The Chancellor thought for a moment, and then told me that that applied in Switzerland. Switzerland! One might expect it there.

I believe—and my view is clearly shared, not merely in the parliamentary Labour party but in the country at large—that those who earn substantial sums, and certainly those who have inherited them, have a duty and a responsibility to pay their fair share in taxation. While I cannot deny that reducing the standard rate has a populist appeal—[HON. MEMBERS: "A popular appeal."]—I believe that it is not always right for that rate to be reduced. That is particularly so, in view of the requirements for essential public expenditure.

Of course Conservative Members sneered when I said that reducing the standard rate had a populist appeal. In France, for example, the Fascist Le Pen has two main planks to his policy. One is to limit and chuck out those who come from abroad, particularly from the African and Arab countries; the other is the reduction of income tax.

If hon. Members believe—as I strongly do—in adequate funding for the National Health Service, proper rates of benefit, including uprated child benefit and adequate provision of essential public services such as housing, education and transport, it is nonsense and economically illiterate for them to argue at the same time, for the repeated reduction of the standard rate of tax. That is a contradiction in terms. I am being consistent. I should like more tax concessions for those on limited incomes, and I believe that those on very modest incomes, certainly those in retirement, should pay no tax at all. I am glad to see that the Financial Secretary at least approves of that. But if we believe that the National Health Service and other essential services are underfunded, it is inconsistent to say that the standard rate should be repeatedly reduced.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): If it could be shown that the reduction of tax rates produces more money for the National Health Service and the other benefits mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, would he vote for such a reduction?

Mr. Winnick: The point that I am making is that the reduction in the standard rate has led to a starvation of essential services. I do not know about the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but in mine, far from there being adequate funding, a large extension to the general hospital which will be completed later this year will not be fully operational next April—as it should be—because there are not enough funds. That is not denied, and the position of other essential services strengthens my argument rather than the hon. Gentleman's.

The business expansion scheme will now include tax relief for private landlords. It will provide a tremendous tax shelter. Although some landlords may be responsible people, there will be quite a few Rachmans among them. In my borough there has been no building of council houses or flats for nine years, and it is not likely to occur as long as the present Government remain in office. Yet there remain a large number of people—I am sure that the same is true of other constituencies—who are on the waiting list and desperate either to be housed in the first place by the local authority, or to be rehoused.

That applies to many of my constituents—some of them with two children—in multi-storey blocks, who have been waiting for years to be offered a house. When they write to me or come to my surgery, I cannot respond, "Get a mortgage." They simply have not the means to do so. It is highly irresponsible for the Government to pursue a policy of ensuring that no council accommodation is built. They are indifferent to the hardship being caused, but they are happy to give nice business expansion schemes to potential Rachmans.

We know that public services are being starved of funds. We know of the public squalor and neglect. It is not even necessary to go to our constituencies: half a mile from the Palace of Westminster, an increasing number of people can be seen spending their nights in wooden boxes—far more than in previous years. They are not all tramps or irresponsible people. Some, undoubtedly, have been faced with matrimonial and other personal problems. But obtaining rented accommodation is out of the question for them.

Do we want what we see in America? I concede that many ordinary people there live in comfortable conditions, far more no doubt than here. I have been to the United States, and I know the standard of living. Accompanying that, however, is so much squalor and neglect. In some parts, certainly in New York, one sees the sort of

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conditions that are more associated with the less-developed world. I do not want to see that here. The counter-revolution of the past few years has tried to reverse all the beneficial changes that have taken place since 1945—to a large extent, until 1979, under successive Governments. All those changes are being eroded and undermined by the present Administration.

Although the Labour party has been unsuccessful in recent years in winning the public argument—if we had won it, we would not be sitting on these Benches—it is encouraging that the opinion polls have demonstrated, as I believe the approaching local elections will demonstrate, that people are beginning to recognise that what we say is right. We have a Government who are of the rich and dedicated to their cause. They are indifferent to those in need, and to the public services. They are a selfish and a hard Government, made up of hard people whose concern —as the Budget has shown—is to reward the wealthy. That is why, with my right hon. and hon. Friends, I shall take much pleasure in voting against the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that 11 hon. Members are still seeking to take part in the debate. I understand that the Front Bench speakers wish to reply at about 9.10 pm. The arithmetic is obvious.

7.28 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Only the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) could describe the present condition of our economy as fragile and then go on to suggest that a Labour Government would return to a high-tax economy in the hope of squeezing in the pounds to spend more on public services. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have learnt nothing from their sad experiences when exactly those policies brought Britain to its knees and them politically to their knees. Long may they remain there.

In the debate on the public expenditure White Paper, I suggested to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor three priorities for his Budget—first, to eliminate the need for any public sector borrowing requirement, secondly, to reduce income tax at every level, and, thirdly, to tackle at long last the reform of the taxation of married women. His Budget and the Finance Bill meet all three of my requirements. Indeed, he did much better than merely eliminating the need for borrowing. He plans a £3 billion debt repayment this year, as for the past year—two years in a row. He announced the much overdue reform of the taxation of married women, he has achieved the 25p target for the standard rate of income tax set by his predecessor in the first term of this Administration, and he has exceeded my hopes by achieving a 40p top rate of income tax.

The envious and malicious tendency of Socialism was much in evidence in the remarks of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). I regret that that was echoed in the contribution of other Opposition Members. We have heard a great deal about the scandalous benefits which will accrue to the rich. Anyone not listening too closely to the hon. Gentleman might have thought that he was describing some enormous state pensions that were being dished out to the idle and undeserving rich. He enunciated once again the Socialist view that every penny of income and wealth should belong to the state and that it should be for the state to decide how much of it should be doled out to various deserving categories among our people.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) came near to falling into the same trap with the implication that there is something intrinsically good about raising taxes and then the Government deciding how those moneys should be spent. There was no hint from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that the so-called largesse that was being distributed to the rich was just a matter of allowing individuals to keep a little more of what was already their own. Tax cuts do not involve giving away; rather, they involve taking less away from those to whom it already belongs. That is an essential truth which one day Opposition Members might recognise.

It would be churlish of me to criticise the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East for making so much of the benefits accruing to the higher income groups because it became increasingly apparent as his speech unrolled that he had few arguments to deploy. The bogus pre-Budget argument that the Budget should have been about NHS spending has now given way to the rather strange notion that the nation's resources are being squandered on tax cuts for the rich.

I was not surprised that the hon. Gentleman was reluctant to be tempted by the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) to consider the effects of tax cuts on taxpayers on average incomes. Few, if any, of my constituents are among the undeserving rich who have been castigated so roundly by the hon. Gentleman. Nor, indeed, are many of my constituents as well off as the average Labour Back Bencher. Therefore, they have a rather close-to-home attitude to the importance of the impact of tax on their incomes and the lifestyles of their families. But with a booming local economy, largely the result of nine years of sound economic management and tax changes which have restored incentive and freed enterprise, many of my constituents prosper on the much higher level of average earnings which we now enjoy under the Government.

If one looks back at the changes that have been made over nine years of Conservative Government, both in the over-indexation of tax allowances and in reductions in the standard rate from 33p in the pound to 25p, one finds that a single man on average earnings receives an extra £15·90 a week in his pocket, over and above the amount that he would have had if the previous tax regime had continued with the Labour Government's 33p in the pound basic rate and personal allowances merely indexed in line with the retail price index. For a married man, the figure is over £18 a week.

Those are not insubstantial benefits for my constituents. They understand when they are better off. They understand such basic facts of life rather better than Opposition Members who are cosseted on income levels of twice average earnings. My constituents remember what life was like under a Labour Government's high tax regime. That is why they continue to send me to the House and not a representative of the Labour party. Because I and many of my hon. Friends have constituents who are prospering on average earnings and are allowed to retain more of those earnings in their own pockets to spend on themselves and their families, they vote for us, not for the defeated colleagues of Opposition Members.

Several Opposition Members poured scorn on the proposals to stimulate the expansion of the private rented housing sector through the business expansion scheme. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary was right to argue that an expanded private rented sector is essential for greater labour mobility. Every week one of my local newspapers, the *Slough Eton and Windsor Observer*, has a supplement of job vacancies which runs to between 30 and 40 pages. Clearly, that offers many job opportunities for those who are unemployed in parts of the country where the low rates of unemployment that we enjoy in Slough have not yet been reached—perhaps refugees from the constituency of the hon. Member for Walsall, North.

I had a letter recently from a man who had come from the midlands and had secured a good job in Slough but whose wife and children remained in the midlands. He cannot buy a house in Slough for the amount that his house in the midlands would realise and he has no prospect of council housing—*[Interruption.]*—nor would he even if there were a much bigger public housing programme, because we have always known that local authorities favour those with local connections and will continue to do so. An expanded private rented sector could offer a solution to the problems of that man and his family and others who face similar circumstances.

Similarly, Opposition Members have been critical of the raising of the threshold for inheritance tax. My right hon. Friend explained that that would mean that in many cases the family home could not be inherited without attracting any tax burden. However, as property prices continue to rise, particularly in the south-east, that will increasingly not be the case. The impact of inheritance tax could give rise to serious problems. I do not speak hypothetically but as a result of a case drawn to my attention by a constituent.

Some people—usually single women who have devoted themselves to looking after aged parents—have no home apart from that which belongs to their parents. On the death of the surviving parent they will be faced with the prospect of finding a substantial sum of money to meet an inheritance tax bill or they will have to leave the family home. There may be a strong case for some further measure of relief when the property that a person is inheriting is his or her only home. I understand the argument that, as there will probably already have been one tax-free inheritance from, say the father to the mother, that cannot continue indefinitely and eventually the Exchequer must get its slice. If that is the case, there could be a good case for deferring the payment of tax until the property is subsequently disposed of, either by its sale or on the death of the person who inherits.

The Finance Bill is but one part of the Budget hat trick to which some of my hon. Friends have referred. The public finances are in robust good health, with a more than balanced budget. The strength of the economy has allowed further increases in public expenditure. For example, the full cost of the restructuring of nurses' pay has been accommodated easily within the reserve which was set by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I hope that some Opposition Members, including the Leader of the Opposition, will hang their heads in shame at their despicable campaign in advance of the Budget, when they suggested that nurses and the Health Service were being sacrificed on the altar of tax cuts. We know that the truth is that we are able to provide both for tax cuts and increases in expenditure and, indeed, for the Government to pay their way and to repay debt.

Opposition Members have argued that the burden of taxation is too high. However, paradoxically, they still intend to vote against the Bill and the tax cuts which it embodies. I agree with the Opposition that the burden of taxation is still too high, even with the reductions embodied in the Bill. However, unlike them, my vote will be consistent with the argument that I have deployed. I shall vote enthusiastically for the Second Reading and for the tax cuts in the Bill. In so doing, I shall urge my right hon. Friends not to rest on their laurels, but to press on with all speed to achieve the next target of a 20p standard rate of income tax.

7.41 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North): I think I can say without fear of contradiction to any reasonable person in this House—and, although all my hon. Friends may not agree, I believe that some of the dissidents on the Government Benches are reasonable people—that this is the most regressive Budget that we have had this century. It marks the complete abandonment by the Conservative party of any belief in the ability to pay as a means of taxation. I am not the only one who says that. The day after the Budget the *Financial Times* also agreed that the Budget was far too one-sided. Further, there is nothing in the 139 clauses of the Bill to suggest that it is any different from the Budget.

Many of my hon. Friends have already pointed to the social injustice in the Budget and in the Finance Bill. I want to concentrate on the impact on our manufacturing industry. Employers and employees alike have complained that the Government have sold manufacturing industry short. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said so eloquently, the fundamental problem of our economy in the manufacturing sector goes back to 1979 and 1980, when the pound was drastically overvalued, killing off more than 2 million jobs in two years. Companies in my constituency have made it clear that, although a few extra jobs have been found in the past two or three years, nothing like those 2 million jobs have been replaced.

It is not only the Labour party that is saying that; the CBI is also saying it. In the March edition of the magazine that all Members receive, the CBI made it clear that it believed interest rates were far too high for manufacturing industry to compete in the world market. It further stated in this month's edition of the magazine, with the hindsight of the Budget, that, unless we get training right in this country, with levels comparable to those in Europe, there is not much hope for the future.

People in manufacturing industry, particularly in the north-east, say that, welcome as the 2,000 new jobs are at Nissan in Sunderland, they do not compensate for the 30,000 jobs lost during the 1980s in the shipbuilding and engineering industries.

The Government tell us that there is money in people's pockets, and that that proves that there is prosperity. Of course there is prosperity in some parts of the country and in particular sections of the community. What the Government do not tell us is that the increased consumption has been satisfied only by an increase in imports. The trade figures tell that story. As against a

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surplus in manufacturing products in 1979, we now have an £8 billion deficit. What is equally alarming is that from 1979 to 1988, when we should have been investing for the future and using our oil revenues productively, we have paid for unemployment with the oil revenues.

Since the Budget there have been further signs of a weakening of the British economy. The continued overvaluation of the pound—I am glad that the Chancellor and the members of his team understand this, even if the Prime Minister does not—threatens our exports and encourages the growth of imports. The overvaluation of the pound, combined with excessively high interest rates, has begun to have an impact on our manufacturing output. It is not welcome news to any of us that manufacturing output has dropped 3 per cent. in the last month. Such unwelcome developments have other serious consequences.

The Chancellor has made estimates in his Red Book of the tax revenue for his financial year. However, if the other sums are wrong, it raises questions about whether public expenditure targets can be met. Other questions are raised on the timetabling of privatisation measures. More seriously, as I tried to point out to the Chief Secretary earlier in the debate, what really worries me is that the deficit on our balance of trade is the second largest of any OECD country, at a time when we are supposed to be prosperous, and it shows further signs of increase. Exports last month were 5 per cent. below the level of 12 months ago. The January and February trade figures show that, contrary to Treasury estimates, the deficit will be £8 billion and not the £4 billion previously forecast.

The key question that this country faces, and that we should be facing in the Finance Bill, is what we shall do when our North sea oil revenues run out. It is not only a question of revenue; it is also a question of the effect on the balance of payments. How do we pay for our future consumption? How do we control our balance of payments? How can we finance future investments, when today manufacturing investment is still 11 per cent. below the level of 1979? The Prime Minister said, "You can't buck the market." I say to the Prime Minister that we cannot duck the real economy. Some people say that it is alarmist to argue this point. Some people in the City will argue that when the oil revenue runs out, the revenue from the City will bridge the gap.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman referred to manufacturing output. I wonder whether he has looked at the Red Book. On page 30, he will see that, between 1973 and 1979, output per head increased by three quarters of 1 per cent., whereas between 1979 and 1987 the annual rate was 4 per cent. The latest figure for 1986 to 1987 is 6·5 per cent. Does not that show an overall strengthening of the economy, which is what everyone else in the world seems to believe, rather than the weakening which he is suggesting?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman is taking up the time of his hon. Friends by intervening. He misses the point that the increase in output between 1974 and 1979 was at a higher rate per annum than the increase between 1981 and 1988. That is the real test, if one discounts the period between 1979 and 1981.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): To set the record straight, if the hon. Gentleman is talking about output, the fact is that, under the previous Labour Government, output fell, whereas it has risen under this Government.

Mr. Henderson: I do not accept that as being statistically accurate—*[Interruption.]* Well, I can provide figures to show that growth and output were at a better rate during the period that I mentioned than in the period post-1981. I shall be happy to exchange those figures with the Minister at a later date.

It has been alleged in some newspapers that Labour Members spend most of their time in the bars of the House of Commons. Most of us recognise that we have a duty to do other things. I recognise that part of my duty is to be a missionary. I have been in the City for lunch on a few days in the recent past. I put it to some of my friends in the City, and perhaps to some of your friends——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I do not have any friends in the City.

Mr. Henderson: I can introduce you to some, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The question that I put to my friends in the City was, how long will that invisible income compensate for the loss in manufacturing income and for the loss in oil income? In 1986, the deficit in manufacturing products was £5·5 billion—I accept that the surplus on invisibles was £8·5 billion—but the dramatic change between then and now tells another story. Those are the figures that the Chancellor included in the Red Book. By 1988, the manufacturing deficit was £8·5 billion and the invisible surplus was still only at the same level. What happens when the deficit in manufacturing is greater than the surplus on invisibles? What will happen to our balance of payments? What will happen to our interest rates? They will be too high even for the Prime Minister. Can domestic deflation be avoided? What are the other implications for our manufacturing sector?

It is said that we should be preparing for the single market in Europe, but unless there is a turn in our economic fortunes and our economic policy, the challenge will not be how much we shall gain, but how much we stand to lose; and what alternatives would we then have to get any benefit from the single market?

I know that time is limited, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I shall draw my remarks to a conclusion. I want to make some positive points about what could have have been included in the Budget and the Finance Bill.

I should have looked for assistance to industry in the north. It is nonsense that we should be continuing to encourage economic activity in the south with the ridiculous business expansion scheme and the extension of rented accommodation, which even the director of the CBI in the north has pointed out is ridiculous. What we really need are positive measures to bring real jobs to the north so that we can have greater efficiency in the country as a whole from greater labour mobility. What we should have been debating this evening is how we would introduce things such as regional differentials in national insurance contributions to encourage employers to move their business to the north and to encourage employees to move to the north.

We could have been discussing things such as rebates in national insurance for companies and institutions which

are good trainers, because we all recognise that in this country training is dreadful. Of course there should be penalties for those who are not prepared to do what is necessary on that. The same could apply to research and development. We all recognise how little we spend in this country on research and development in comparison to others. We could have been debating what the Finance Bill could do to give incentives to institutions throughout the country to improve their R and D.

The wealth of our country, and especially of the north where my constituency is, has always depended on our ability to use our labour talents to make things that people in other parts of the world want to buy. We cannot survive any other way.

A Second Reading of this Finance Bill will further dent our already damaged economy. Far from the financial prudence that the Chancellor claims, this Bill is nothing more than a rich man's profligacy. I urge Conservative Members, especially those thinking Members who have been prepared to stand up for standards of decency in this country, who share our belief in the need to retain Britain as a manufacturing nation, and who care about economic development in areas other than the south of England, to join us this evening in the Lobby in voting against the Second Reading of the Bill.

7.54 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): This is the first Finance Bill debate that I have had the privilege of hearing from the Floor of the House. I have listened to many Budget debates on the radio, and I must say that this year's was quite the best Budget that I have ever heard.

Most hon. Members will have welcomed the sudden emancipation of women and the removal from tax of woodlands, covenants and maintenance payments. The slashing of the higher rates of tax was more controversial, but those of us who are concerned about regenerating the growth of this country, and those of us who would like to see an end to the philosophy of, "It does not matter how much money one gives to the poor; what matters is how much money one can take away from the rich," will also have welcomed the slashing of the higher rates as a brave and necessary step.

In his Budget speech, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said that it would be a tax reform Budget, and so it was. He has a reputation for wanting to be a tax-reforming Chancellor and we can see from the Bill that he is very good at it. However, there is a niggling worry that it might not go far enough because there is a fear—there is always a fear—that the Inland Revenue may produce Bills that need a second bite at the cherry because the reforms do not quite reach the conclusions that they should. In the changes to capital gains tax, which I welcome, adding such gains to a person's income and taxing them at the marginal rate of tax are excellent moves but they produce the opportunity for further amendments to the capital gains tax legislation.

I wonder whether it is necessary to continue with the disincentives that prevent people from converting income into capital. If income is to be taxed at the same rate as capital gains, the conversion of that income is no longer nearly so beneficial. It is true that there will be some benefits—for example, the additional threshold of £5,000 for capital gains tax and the indexation of capital gains tax.

Two points can be made about that. First, the threshold of £5,000 is likely to have been used already by people who are interested in conversion of income to capital. Secondly, if the Government are serious about reducing inflation to nil, as I hope and expect they are, the indexation of capital gains should become increasingly irrelevant.

It seems a little odd that indexation should continue to exist, partly because this Government have abolished stock relief, presumably on the ground that they have inflation nearly under control. That ground is valid. Continuing with hideously complicated schemes for the indexation of capital gains seems a pity, especially when one has the simplification of adding capital gains to income tax, about which I have already spoken.

One of the changes introduced by the Bill, that of rebasing capital gains to 1982, is welcome because it deals with the largely inflationary gains of pre-1982. One factor about indexation is that it was introduced pre-1982, at roughly the time when inflation began to come under control. I believe that exactly the same thing happened with gilt-edged stock and national savings. Just when inflation was coming under control, indexation was introduced—just when it became a little less valuable to the investor.

That is the reason for re-basing the tax to 1982. That is done in clause 91, which also states that the clause may not be used either to create or to increase a loss if the loss would have occurred under the previous legislation. That may have been thought to be necessary, but in many cases it will mean that people will need to do two computations of tax, one under the old system and another under the new system. That will be a pity.

It also means that pre-1982 shares which were pooled cannot be combined with post-1982 shares. That is also a pity, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said, the simplification of tax ought to be one of the major aims of the Bill.

Coming back to the main thrust of my speech, I should love to see a reduction in the number of measures dealing with tax, so that ordinary people can understand it. In particular, I should like to see the removal of disincentives to convert income into capital. For example, is it necessary for the controlled foreign companies legislation to continue to exist? Is it necessary for the offshore funds legislation to continue? Can we do away with what used to be section 460 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970, which is now clause 703 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Bill 1988? Can we also legislate on the basis of the marine Midlands case, as I believe is contemplated? Do we need to apportion the income of closed companies?

All those things and many more could now be looked at because of the brave reforms that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made. This is an excellent Budget, but I ask whether it goes quite far enough.

8.1 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): In looking at the Budget, I am struck, as so many of my hon. Friends have been, by the fact that the world really is divided into two. What is particularly intriguing is the way in which the human race is divided in two in relation to what motivates it. Psychology textbooks usually deal with

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sticks and carrots. In this context there seems to be one breed needing carrots, which is basically the rich, and another needing sticks—basically, the poor.

The combination of the Budget and the social security reviews is the most regressive approach to the poor of any Prime Minister. I could go back further than most, and say that we need to go back to the time of Walpole for a comparison. He was the last Prime Minister of whom I am aware who did not believe in progressive taxation. He thought that the country needed regressive taxation in order to encourage people to escape from taxation. That is what we have here.

No-one has succeeded in convincing the Opposition that the tax concessions given to the well-off will spur them to further activity. The concessions given so far, if they were designed to be the spur, should have encouraged people to be very active. No-one has been able to demonstrate how the extra money in the pockets of wealthy people will spur them into extra financial activity.

Since the social security rules have changed, constituents have been mobbing our surgeries. One cannot explain to them the psychology of the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Department of Health and Social Security. What can I say to them? I should like the Minister to answer.

What do I say, for instance, to Sergeant William Hemphill, formerly of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who led his platoon with conspicuous gallantry in the north Africa campaign, and in doing so lost an arm? Since then, he has received a war disability pension. Because of that, in the recent social security changes, he has to pay £38 a month extra in rent. What do I say to him? Why has he been targeted in this way? Why has he been chosen to receive less income, whereas the wealthy young man who was referred to by my hon. Friend the Memberfor Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has been chosen to receive extra income?

In whose interests is that? I cannot find an answer to give to Sergeant Hemphill. Is the reason that the loss of an arm has been fully paid for now? Is it because he is, at the age of 76, too dependent upon his pension and needs to be taught a lesson? What has he done, and what is wrong with his behaviour that merits his being singled out now to pay nearly £10 a week extra in rent? We receive no answer from the Minister in that case. But that £10 is part of Sergeant Hemphill's extra taxation under the Budget and the social security changes. He has to pay the poll tax in addition.

The Government have broken the link between earnings and pensions and they are perhaps £4 billion better off now as a result. Why has Sergeant Hemphill been singled out in this way? Why does he not need incentives in exactly the same way?

I am delighted that many of my hon. Friends who have spoken in the debate have been concentrating upon the decline in manufacturing industry. This was done earlier particularly eloquently by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He saw the same article as I did, published in *Siemens Review*, which is a valuable illustration of the point that we are making.

We believe that the Government have taken the wrong model. In a simplistic way, the Government think that there was an agricultural revolution, followed by an industrial revolution. Now they think that they are moving to a services revolution. But it is not like that at all. As my right hon. Friend says, people certainly moved away from living directly on the land, but many people still live by the land. The food processing industry and parts of the chemical industries, and many people, are still dependent upon the produce of this earth for their living.

Similarly with the industrial revolution. We need to demonstrate that fewer people will be employed in manufacturing industry in future. The Labour party accepts that, and that it is necessary to get maximum productivity. But the health and strength of that manufacturing industry is absolutely the key to development of the service industry. These are services, but for what? This is marketing, but for what? What are the legal services and accountancy services for? They cannot simply take in all their own washing all the time. There has to be a very healthy manufacturing base in this country; otherwise our current growth will fizzle out. When the oil revenues go and there ceases to be income from privatisation, and when all the one-off benefits have gone, what will this country live on?

The obvious question to ask is why are we so confident that we shall hold on to our services industry. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), I have been trying to understand the City. I know that they are scared stiff of the Japanese moving in at present and taking an ever-increasing market. But certainly we need to follow the example of the West German and Japanese economies to ensure that we have a strong manufacturing base to keep this country going.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne was saying, parts of the country that we represent have never recovered from the slaughter of 1979-82. We really cannot understand why the Government are so blasé and indifferent towards manufacturing industry. We plead with them to look afresh at this issue.

I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle, North about the importance of education. No sane country with our bad record on education and training would be cutting our universities or failing to press ahead with an expansion of nursery education. We have the worst record in Europe.

The Government must answer those key issues. Why do they divide the population into those who need sticks and those who need carrots, and why are the sticks always administered to those at the bottom and the carrots to those at the top? Why do they neglect manufacturing industry? Why do they not see how far they lag behind our competitors in providing an education system from cradle to grave and of the highest possible quality?

8.10 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I feel considerable gratitude for at least one measure in this Budget—the independent taxation of man and wife. It is perhaps somewhat overdue, for the present tax system dates back 180 years to when not only was a women's property regarded as her husband's, but she herself was regarded in some way as his property. From then until the mid-1970s, when the equal opportunities legislation was passed, a women's right to vote, to earn her living and to be hanged was recognised, but not her right to be taxed independently.

The equal opportunities legislation recognised financial discrimination against women. It gave women, for the first time, the right not to be discriminated against in such areas as the provision of mortgages and hire purchase arrangements, when hitherto they had often been required to have a male guarantor sign any financial agreement. Yet the Labour Government, who were implementing legislation which gave greater financial independence to women, did not see fit to extend it to taxation. A woman was still regarded as a second-class citizen in terms of taxation and has been until this major, significant, reforming Budget.

One would have thought that Labour Members would have given a rousing welcome to this measure. Perhaps their lukewarm reception stems partly from their envy, which they always seem to postulate, of the financially successful, partly from their envy of a Government who have their act together, and partly from shame that they did not implement this long-overdue measure. When they seek to decry it, they do so saying, "Ah well, it favours the rich and the better-off because you will now disaggregate" —that is the fashionable word for the good old-fashioned word "separate"—"the income of male and female; thus higher taxation will not be applied when previous aggregation was subject to higher taxation." That is a good reason for this measure. The old system undoubtedly constituted a tax on marriage in exactly the same way as the former allowance of double tax relief on mortgages for unmarried persons was a tax on marriage.

The removal of those taxes on marriage is important, not just because it may make some women or couples better off—that is not the aim—but because of the social recognition, first, of a woman in her own right and, secondly, of the independent role of a wife. That is the crucial philosophy behind removing taxes on marriage. It is not merely an encouragement of the family or the sorting out of an anomaly, but a long overdue social recognition of the role of a woman.

Furthermore, the measure allows for the first time privacy between the partners in a marriage. In many marriages that is not regarded as necessary, and financial privacy is seen to have no role. But there are marriages in which one partner is a more prudent saver than the other, and marriages which are perhaps going wrong and one partner wants to start making provision for an inevitable break. Frequently, the woman has been the partner in either of those two categories. This reform not only preserves privacy, but helps women in those difficult circumstances.

Above all, the measure recognises a simple truth: that the person who is responsible for earning money, saving it, putting it towards a pension, winning it or whatever, is also responsible for its taxation and for paying the dues on it.

This is the most significant fiscal and social reform for well over a decade. I believe that I speak not only on behalf of married women who are my constituents, not only on my own behalf, but for married women everywhere and, indeed, for single women who will hail this measure as one of the greatest steps forward this century in social justice and the recognition of women.

8.16 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Neither the nation nor most people will benefit measurably from the Bill. The Government are practised at making up proportions of gainers and losers. They have been rumbled by their own Back Benchers on their claims for housing benefit; they will be found out by the country on their claims for this Budget.

We know what sort of average the Chancellor has targeted. The hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) gave the answer when he spoke during questions to the Prime Minister in strong support of the nobility and gentry as against the interests of working people. The Budget gainers are people like Mr. and Mrs. N.L., who profit from an income tax cut of more than £70 a week. While their neighbours, with whom they are hardly on speaking terms, also gain nearly £4,000 a year, millions of people on low incomes will take home only a few pence more, only to lose what little they have gained from direct taxation in rises in the cost of gas, electricity and petrol forced on them by the Chancellor. While the Chancellor and his Cabinet colleagues have gained almost £80,000 a year from the Budget's tax cuts, 1 million people have lost housing benefit.

The Chief Secretary mentioned a raft of economic measures. He did not say that his raft is buoyed up by pensioners, the low-paid, the poor and the unemployed. The Chancellor has found a new seam to mine to finance tax cuts for the well-off, and that seam is the poor. He has taken £4 billion from pensioners alone to provide for the 40 per cent. tax ceiling and for incentives to landlords—in short, for this year's tax cuts. All that has been made possible by the Chancellor fixing the weekly retirement pensions of individuals and couples at £9 and £14 below what the rates would have been if the pensions had remained pegged to salary rises. The Government have struck it rich by mining the poor.

Conservative Members may be sceptical, but they need only look at page 6 of the Red Book to see that the Government have raised over £2 billion more than they spent, not to help the Health Service and not to reimburse the pensioners or to give them a raft—to use the Chief Secretary's phrase—but to prepare the way for helping those who have, at the expense of those who have not.

Nor have the poor been protected by increased social security spending. The rise in social security spending has been forced on the Government by their own policies, which have doubled unemployment and tripled the numbers who depend on state benefits. Of course the Government are spending more money on state benefits than the last or any other Labour Government, because the present Government are the first to drive people into poverty and then to boast about it, and at the same time they have increased the burden of taxation on everyone else. It is shameful that the Chancellor should claim to have reduced the burden of taxation in Britain when he has hoisted it to some 4 per cent. above the rate that existed a decade ago.

The saddest thing about the increased tax burden is that the poor have to pay disproportionately more than the well-off in tax, and it is they who have suffered from day one of the first Budget of this Government. That sacrifice has not helped to improve our manufacturing base or our home investment and production. Instead, we have seen the economy built on the shifting sands of North sea oil, national asset-stripping and a credit explosion, with a massive trade deficit as a direct result.

Some of the microeconomic aspects of this Bill have been raised; others require to be stressed. Personal credit

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has never been more readily available, nor has it ever been so irresponsibly given. Appendix 12 of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee report details the mushrooming of buying on the never-never. Not that the £30 billion currently being borrowed by individuals is being used for British goods; the Government's policies have left our home-based industries ill-prepared to meet consumer demand. We can expect to see imports continue to soar as a result of the Budget.

The continuation of the high pound will serve only to exacerbate the trend. Indeed, the Government's official prediction of the trade deficit given in chapter 3 of the Red Book as £4 billion appears to be highly optimistic when compared with the predictions of all respectable economic forecasters.

We know that the Budget will fuel an irresponsible credit boom. We see with sorrow the likely increase in imports, to the detriment of home-based industries. We wince at the "kick start" for private landlordism—an unfortunate metaphor used by the Chief Secretary today—since my experience when chairing the housing committee in Edinburgh was of unscrupulous private landlords kicking tenants. Exploitation is rife in the private sector and any attempt to strengthen the rights of private tenants has been frustrated by the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales.

We can also predict that the Budget, with its disproportionate tax benefits to the better-off, will stoke up spiralling house prices, and not just in the south-east. Many of my constituents in Edinburgh are appalled as house prices rocket. Three-bedroom flats are regularly changing hands at £60,000 and more, and these, as well as smaller flats, are beyond the purchasing power of very many of my constituents, especially couples starting out on modest incomes—incomes which, sadly, merit little support from this Budget.

The Budget not only aims to refuse help to those on modest incomes, but does not seek to reinvigorate British industry. It does nothing to regenerate our tattered economy. That is why I and my hon. Friends will join the country in rejecting it.

8.23 pm

Mr. Quentin Davis (Stamford and Spalding): The more I look at the Bill, the more I feel that we are facing a most distinguished piece of potential legislation. There are three aspects of the Budget that I believe deserve the cliché "historic" and I think that in retrospect they will be recognised in that way.

The first aspect is the removal of the existing discrimination in our taxation system against women and against marriage. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) has already spoken very eloquently about that. Suffice it to say that I believe that within a generation or two it will seem quite as unbelievable and primitive that in the late 20th century we discriminated against women and marriage in this way as it seems to us now that until the last century married women were not allowed to own property of their own and until this century women did not have the vote.

The second momentously historic feature of the Budget is the tax cuts, and particularly the cuts in the standard rate and higher rates of income tax. Those higher rate reductions have already generated a great deal of emotion among Labour Members and I am afraid that much of that emotion may have been expended rather needlessly, indeed rather wastefully.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) who opened the debate for the Opposition, said that he regarded the tax cuts as representing—I hope that I am quoting him correctly—the widening of inequality at the expense of the deepening of poverty. If I really believed in that analysis of this Budget, I should be delighted to follow the hon. Gentleman into his Lobby after the debate—at least I do not know that I should do it delightedly, but I should certainly feel that it was my duty to do so. However, I believe that the Budget represents precisely the opposite case, where it is pre-eminently right to use fiscal action to make the rich richer, because that is the most effective way of making the poor richer too.

Perhaps it is a little difficult for Opposition Members who have little experience of business and commerce to appreciate to the full the psychological effect on a business of reducing taxes in the way that we are about to do: the effect on motivation, the effect on work and the effect, above all, on risk-taking. Perhaps that effect is most powerful on those people who are contemplating setting up a new business or those businesses that are contemplating new ventures.

If Opposition Members do not like anecdotal evidence of this kind, I refer them to orthodox financial theory, which tells us that, if we increase the reward while the risk remains the same, more investment will take place. It is as simple as that, and surely a reduction in tax rates, whatever else it may be, is incontrovertibly an increase in the potential reward.

If Opposition Members do not like standard financial theory either, perhaps I could refer them to some of the empirical work that has been done on this subject and particularly to a study completed in the last few weeks by the macroeconomic research unit of Liverpool university, which has calculated that the effect of the higher rate tax cuts being brought in by my right hon. Friend will be an increase in national income of some one full percentage point in a given year; and that the effect of the reduction of the standard rate to 25 per cent. will be an increase in national income of some £1 billion a year. That would imply an increase in the resources available to the country as a whole of some £4 billion to £5 billion in a year—a very remarkable achievement.

The third aspect to the Budget which I believe deserves the epithet "historic" is the fact that we have now achieved a budget surplus. We have not only achieved a balanced Budget, but have gone into surplus. For those of us of my generation that is something that has not happened before, at least in our memory, although it may have in our lifetime. In order to get the measure of the achievement one has to set it in its international as well as its historical context. I am sorry that, so far as I know, no one referring to this matter has yet done that in the House or, indeed, in the media.

I believe that I am right in saying that we are the only one of the principal developed Western countries currently to have a balanced budget or a budgetary surplus. Other Governments have been equally, perhaps they would say more, committed to financial rigour—the Germans, for example—but they have certainly not yet achieved a balanced budget. If there was an international Olympic

games for Finance Ministers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer could not in my opinion under any circumstances be denied the gold medal.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Which is better—to achieve a balanced budget and satisfy a Chancellor from the Conservative party, or to have a better standard of living and a better economy, as they do in Germany?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman falls right into the trap. He demonstrates by his intervention that the Labour party still believes that there is some trade-off between growth and a balanced budget or, in other words, that there is a positive correlation between a fiscal deficit and the rate of growth. We have proven in the best way possible, in practice, that that relationship does not exist. We have proved that the relationship is negative because we now have the fastest growth rate in Europe and also the only budget surplus.

The achievement of the balanced budget brings me to a few reflections about fiscal policy. It has been a general consensus in the academic world, widely subscribed to on the Government Benches for the past 10 years or so, that the fiscal policy pursued by Governments of both parties in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which sought to smooth the fluctuations of the economy, was fundamentally misconceived and that such fine tuning, as it was known, was at least as likely to exacerbate volatility as to reduce it.

A second consensus existed on the Government Benches for many years before 1979. After 1979 we were able to do something about it. The consensus was that there was a great danger in a fiscal deficit or PSBR—the phrase that we lived with for so long in political debates and in the media—and that that inherent danger existed because, even under the best circumstances, if a PSBR was fully funded, it would crowd out borrowing, and therefore investment in the private sector.

And there always was the danger, which over the years was ever more likely to become a certainty, that a time would come when full funding could no longer take place, that the borrowing Government would lose the confidence of the markets, and that that Government would therefore only be able to face the growing burden of debt service by resorting to a destructive and indeed disastrous inflation. So we took it as an autonomous aim of our policy, to be pursued for its own sake, to reduce that deficit. We have done that, and it is a magnificent achievement.

Where do we go from here? What will be the role of fiscal policy from now on? That is not a purely academic question. As we discuss the matter today, we know that monetary policy has been used in recent weeks to address the danger felt in some quarters of overheating in the economy. The effect of using monetary policy by increasing interest rates to address that problem brings about two perverse consequences.

The first effect of raising interest rates is to draw in capital across the exchanges from abroad, pushing up the parity of sterling. That means that any dampening of demand achieved through that mechanism falls particularly hard on the internationally traded sector of the economy, including manufacturing. That is a major problem with that approach, which has been generally recognised.

The second perverse effect of the use of monetary measures in those circumstances is to exacerbate a balance of trade deficit, which was probably one of the signals that appeared to indicate the existence of potential overheating in the first place. Had fiscal measures rather than monetary measures been used to address the problem, those perverse consequences would have been avoided. I leave aside for the moment whether other perverse consequences would have occurred.

There are good reasons for what I understand, without inside knowledge, to be the hesitation of the authorities to use fiscal measures in this way. There is the fear of reverting to the old bad days of fine tuning. That fear also is somewhat misconceived, because the difficult decisions of what one might call market management—the decision whether to intervene and, if so, in what direction and to what extent—has to be taken whether one is adopting fiscal or monetary measures.

There is the psychological principle to which many of us are committed, that it is a major element of the new confidence that has been established that we have clear annual budgets which are kept to and we do not have sudden emergency fiscal measures, which were a speciality of the Labour party when it was in power. There are also the technical factors that monetary measures appear more flexible and have always been regarded as such.

This is not the place to answer those questions. I merely set them down. I have no doubt that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench and their officials have been giving these matters considerable deliberation over a long time, but perhaps with particular intensity over the last few months. Whether now or on another appropriate occasion, I hope that we may hear from them what they think about these important matters and how they will address the future of fiscal policy in the new age which we have reached and for which I salute the Government, in which we have got rid of that terrible British institution, the PSBR, and have a fiscal surplus.

8.36 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): That is not the first sermon that I have heard from the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) on the perfect working of the market, but it assumes a mathematical and calculus model of society which ignores the people. It is the view of the Labour party that Budgets should deliver social justice to all the people.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) mentioned that 18 million people in Britain were on the breadline, Conservative Members thought it unbelievable and challenged his figure, despite the fact that the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) drew the attention of the House to the figure when speaking in the debate on child benefit.

Conservative Members have no concept of the scale and extent of poverty. Do they realise that over 3 million wage earners do not benefit at all from the tax cuts in the Budget because they earn too little to pay tax? Effectively the Budget is writing off one third of the population—18 million people. It is writing the poor into the margins of society.

Conservative Members accuse us of preaching the gospel of envy when we make challenges on behalf of the poor. What do we get? We were told earlier that we needed more capitalists. Perhaps we should all emulate the 20,000 millionaires in Britain. There is an assumption that everyone wants to be a millionaire. I am tempted to reflect on the example of Howard Hughes who lived alone in his

[Mr. John Battle]

castle, wandering around eccentrically in the dark in his carpet slippers. He was to be pitied rather than envied. What everyone wants is the opportunity to live a decent and happy life.

Do Ministers know that officers who will administer the social fund will advise claimants to obtain from a library the "Charities Digest" to see whether they can ring up charities for the bare necessities that they need? Do Ministers know that the advice in a leaflet handed out to claimants at social security benefit offices instructs them to look more carefully at how they spend their money? Under the heading "Shopping on a Budget", it gives people the following advice:

"1. Shop around—if necessary, visit a number of stores and compare prices . . .

4. Some shops reduce goods at or near the 'sell by' date, or if the packaging is damaged. These may still be worthwhile buys if used quickly . . .

5. Remember—special offers are good but only if you *really* want the item . . .

6. Read and compare labels to check prices and amounts, eg a 400 g pack of biscuits @ 28p . . . 7p/100 g, 300 g pack of biscuits @ 24p . . . 8p/100 g. Don't be deceived by bulky packaging.

7. Use a shopping list and keep to it as far as possible."

And finally, worst of all—

"8. Don't shop when hungry—you may be tempted to buy more than you need."

I suggest that those people who pay the price for the cuts in social security can well do the arithmetic when it comes to shopping. I wish to try and warm the heart of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding by reading to the House a brief poem, called, "The Shopper". It reads:

"I am an old woman . . .
Pension rates were cut. My children
Gave me the pennies they could spare. But
I could hardly buy anything now. So at first
I went less often to the shops where I'd gone daily,
But one day I thought it over, and then
Daily once more I went to the baker's, the greengrocer's
As an old customer.
With care I picked my provisions
Took no more than I used to, but no less either
Put rolls beside the loaf and leeks beside the cabbage and only
When they added up the bill did I sigh
With my stiff fingers dug into my little purse
And shaking my head confessed that I didn't have enough
To pay for those few things, and shaking my head I
Left the shop, observed by all the customers,
I said to myself:
If all of us who have nothing
No longer turn up where food is laid out
They may think we don't need anything
But if we come and are unable to buy
They'll know how it is."

In 1979, the Prime Minister took the famous shopping basket and held it up, suggesting that it contained the basic budget of society. I invite the Government to take up that shopping basket again and to go around the supermarket with a pensioner on £41 a week or with a family on less than half the average weekly income and show whether one can put the provisions to live on for a week in that same shopping basket.

Just before Christmas 1983, the Prime Minister said:

"There is no Government definition of poverty . . .".

That remark has been echoed today.

"The fact remains that people living in need are fully and properly provided for."

That is manifestly untrue and the Budget builds the untruth of that statement into the structure of our economy and the people of this country are now increasingly aware of that.

8.43 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I am no poet, but the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) are well made.

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced his Budget, he set himself four basic principles on personal taxation. The first was to reduce tax rates where, he said, they were clearly too high. He appears to have failed in that objective. If one studies the Inland Revenue booklet "International Comparisons of Direct Taxation on Employment Income", published at the end of last year, one finds that, before the Budget, the marginal tax rates for a married man on, for example, £75,000 per annum were lower than those in France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands. They are now also lower than those of the United States. But if we contrast that with a man earning £5,000 a year, we find that his marginal rate of tax was the highest of those countries and that is still the case.

When we consider tax and national insurance as a percentage of earnings, we see, for example, that a married couple with two children, on half the average earnings, in 1978-79, when the Government took office, were paying 14·5 per cent. The figure is now 15·4 per cent. However, if we contrast that with somebody on 1,000 per cent. of average earnings, we see that his rate has fallen from 65·6 to 37 per cent. A minority of the population has benefited. The tax rates are too high for the low-paid and too low for the highly paid. In addition, the balance is going the wrong way. That is the main reason why we object to the underlying philosophy of the Budget.

When we consider national insurance, which is quite a substantial burden on the low-paid, we again see anomalies. There are no allowances set against national insurance. They are raised on gross income and, for some reason, they stop at the magic figure of £15,860. We know that there is a disincentive at a certain stage when one goes from 7 per cent. to 9 per cent. of contributions. Many people working regular overtime meet that problem.

We also have to consider how badly those on low incomes have been hit as a result of the benefit changes and Government-inspired inflation. Electricity prices have been driven upwards to fatten up the electricity industry for privatisation. From that, as well as increased rents and the introduction of the poll tax, we can see that those who are worse off have a higher marginal tax rate and have to meet other costs. At the same time, the better-off are paying less tax in real terms.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how he he has the nerve to refer to Government-inspired inflation, when, under his party—admittedly, before he came to this place—inflation did not need to be inspired? It just went on and on and up and up. This is the first Government who have curbed it.

Mr. Darling: With respect to the hon. Lady, my recollection is that inflation went up quite dramatically shortly after her Government assumed office in 1979. However, I concede that it has come down since then. The

Government-inspired electricity price rises will have an effect on industry and on the price of goods, as well as a direct effect on those who use electricity in their homes.

Many of my colleagues found very upsetting the laughter from Conservative Benches when my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said that 18 million people were living in poverty. When he said that that figure included children, there were roars of laughter from Conservative Benches. Surely it is common sense that, if a person's mother and father are poor, the chances are that that person is poor too. That is quite obvious.

I cannot understand why—no Conservative Member has made this point—a rich person needs more money to make him work harder, whereas a poor person needs less money to make him work harder. That is one of the great mysteries that no Conservative Member is prepared to explain.

The second objective that the Chancellor set himself was to reduce or abolish unwanted tax rates. I refer yet again to the business expansion scheme. It is ironic that a subsidy has been given to those who want to invest in property speculation when, at the same time, the poorest people in society, who have to live in rented accommodation, find that their subsidy from the state, by way of housing benefit, is being reduced, if not taken away. It is common sense that, if one is serious about helping people who are looking for accommodation, the subsidy should be paid to them so that they can shop around. They can then exercise the choice that the Government say is so important.

It was said earlier that there are plenty of jobs in Slough. The most important thing that we can do is to encourage jobs to move away from the south-east; therefore, encouraging more people to come to the south-east appears to be counter-productive. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for his remarks on decentralisation of industry. We in Edinburgh know only too well the difficulties of encouraging firms to move their headquarters and the control of their businesses from the south-east to Scotland and other regions.

The third objective which the Chancellor set himself was to make life a little simpler for the taxpayer. Again, there is a contrast. For the richest in society there certainly has been simplification—simplification of the capital gains tax and inheritance tax. We are told that these steps are necessary because, if they are not taken, accountants will ensure that tax is avoided or evaded.

Surely we are not saying that, just because some people do not pay tax, we should make life even more simple for them. If that is so, surely there would be a deputation of accountants coming to see us to complain that they were being done out of business. The more the well-off are helped, the more the accountants will carry on burrowing away to ensure that their clients benefit even more.

At the same time as matters are made simple for the better-off, they are made simple, I must confess, for the poorest. Housing benefit has been made simple for a large number of people—they simply do not get it. That is the simplest form of benefit that one can contemplate. Why, when the Government say that they are concerned about fringe benefits, do they not impose a tax on them? Why do they not tax them in the hand of the employer? That is what Australia and New Zealand are doing—countries constantly held up to the Opposition as examples to which we should look. That is a fine example of something at which the Chancellor might look. It is an easy and efficient method.

The fourth objective set by the Chancellor was to remove some of the manifest injustices from the system. Far from removing them, he has created more. We should look, for example, at the treatment of capital for tax purposes and for benefit purposes. A pensioner with savings of £3,500 is deemed to receive £1 per week for every extra £250 in savings. If we disregard the £3,000, that is an investment rate of 21 per cent. That is what the pensioner is supposed to be getting from each extra £250. Under the present regulations there is a disincentive to save.

That pensioner may be contrasted with a well-paid company director who invests £3,000 a year in a personal equity plan. He is provided with a concession because tax is not paid on reinvested dividends and he is exempt from capital gains tax. A press release handed out on the day of the Budget said of the personal equity plans:

> "Investors do not need to keep records, or declare their dividends and gains on their tax returns—hence a personal equity plan does not give rise to any involvement with the Inland Revenue whatever."

That is very nice indeed—as Arthur Daley would say, "A nice little earner." It is available only to the better-off, not to those who need it.

If the Government are interested in equity and are genuinely interested in reforming, they should give tax breaks to the poor and not to that small, narrow band on whom the Government's economic policy seems to concentrate. We would do well to remember that those whose standard of living has improved over the past seven or eight years owe that not just to our improved balance of payments, because of North sea oil, or to privatisation proceeds but to the large amount of money that has been plundered from the worse-off, through fewer benefits and the change in pension arrangements.

We are living off the poorest in society. Anyone who has gained the advantages that this Government extol must remember that. It is wrong. The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) said that privatisation was spreading popular capitalism. We should remember that, outside the south-east of England, about 9 per cent. of the population bought shares. That does not take account—because it cannot be readily calculated—of how many unloaded the shares at the first opportunity.

We would also do well to remember that, although many individuals are better off, we as a country are all the poorer because part of the tax handouts is funded through a steady and relentless cut in public services. Why is the value of public services so denigrated by the Government? All of us, especially the better-off, benefit from public services—education, both at schools and universities, the use of our roads and our hospitals. If one has enough money, one can purchase a private hospital plan, but the private hospitals live off the NHS.

All of us use public services. It is not just the province of the poor. The Government have a very short-term policy towards public services. They are being systematically run down, and the Government will rue the day that they embarked on that policy. They seem to have a Brazilian idea of the economy: pour money into the hands of the few and just forget the rest and hope that they will survive.

[Mr. Darling]

We must make a contrast in this land of plenty where there have been gainers and there are people doing well. Often not very far away from the man who is spending another few hours on the golf course is the pensioner who is presenting himself or herself at the local DHSS office for a payment from the social fund—the latter-day soup kitchen of the 1980s. That is an indictment of the Government.

We do not dispute that this country is doing better than it was five or six years ago. Indeed, it is perhaps doing better than in Gladstonian times, but so what? The question is how the division of spoils is made. It is in that division that the Government are found sadly wanting. The better-off are getting more and those who are not are losing out. That makes this country as a whole much the poorer, and that is the indictment of the Bill.

8.55 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): The Budget, the poll tax, the social security changes and the other Bills which we shall discuss this Session are a culmination of nine years of redressing the balance in British society and of redistributing wealth and power away from working people and their families in favour of privileges for the wealthy. The Government have created a yawning gap between rich and poor, between the industrial inner cities and the more prosperous suburbs.

Families in Yorkshire and Humberside spend, on average, £60 a week less on goods and services than families in the south-east. When we consider that the south-east figures include some of the most deprived areas, in terms of the inner-London boroughs, we can see the enormous gap between the standards of living in, say, the Thames valley and in northern industrial towns.

During the Budget debate, the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), whose ideas and understanding of social and economic processes are far superior to the present incumbents of the Government Front Bench, with some understatement, said:

"I believe that it is more than a little insensitive to hand out quite so much money to the rich . . . especially at a time when next month quite a lot of people will find their social benefits markedly reduced."

More tellingly, the right hon. Gentleman went on to say:

"The Government are taking some unwarrantable social risks."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 1143.]

I have had several letters from pensioners and others in my constituency about the social conditions of today, and I had intended to read them. Instead, I shall refer to one small incident from my constituency.

A woman lived in a council flat that caught fire. A single parent with children, she lost all her possessions in the fire. The woman was rehoused immediately, humanely and helpfully by Bradford council, but she is now in a flat with no furniture, curtains, carpets, cooker or beds. What are her options? Is she to go cap in hand to the social fund and obtain a loan when she cannot even pay for insurance to protect her property? How on earth can she repay a loan like that? That is modern Conservatism; it is Disraeli's one nation stood on its head. That shows the compassion of Ministers who benefited personally by £80 a week from the tax cuts in the Budget.

The Government have not done much for people on average or somewhat above average income, either. Fifty per cent. of the tax cuts went to the top 10 per cent. in society, while only 10 per cent. of those tax cuts went to the bottom 50 per cent. of income earners. Overall taxation, including indirect taxation and National Insurance contributions, has increased from 34 per cent. to 38 per cent. under the Government. That taxation hits working people and the poorer members of society much harder than others.

Manufacturing investment is now between 9 and 11 per cent. below what it was in 1979, and manufacturing production is now only equal to its peak of eight years ago. The increase of between 4·5 and 5 per cent. in the past financial year must be set against the decline of the pound against the dollar in the preceding period, a process that has now been reversed as against the dollar and the deutschmark. That will hit British exports and British manufacturing industry hard in the near future.

Michael Prouse in the *Financial Times* made the point that the much-vaunted increase in productivity still leaves Britain with between one third and one half of the level of the individual productivity of its major competitors. The Government's most notable achievement has been to be the first in British history to preside over a net deficit of trade in manufacturing, which is now predicted to reach £14 billion.

When the Chancellor's predecessor removed hire purchase restrictions in 1982, the volume of national credit was £9 billion. In the first seven months of 1986, it had risen to £17·75 billion. In May last year, the Bank of England commented on the sharp increase in personal debt. It stated, for instance, that the number of houses taken into possession in 1985 was seven times the number so taken in 1979. That shows that in any sort of recession even those who benefited slightly from the Budget and who feel that they are a little better off than their fellow citizens would face a nightmare, with unemployment going hand in hand with large personal debts from the recent credit boom.

In recent months, Conservative Members have repeatedly raised the idea that the service sector of the economy can somehow replace manufacturing. That is a profound error. In a report entitled, "Services—The Second Industrial Revolution", the Institute of Manpower Studies questioned the view that more service jobs could compensate for the loss of manufacturing employment. The report predicted that the process fo technological advance, mergers, economies of scale and the desire to reduce unit labour costs would accelerate, and inhibit job creation in much the same way as has already happened in manufacturing.

The report examined seven growth areas, including distribution, banking, hotels, catering and professional services. The conclusion was that, although those industries will grow, their job-creating potential is diminished and their wealth-generating potential is not on the same scale as that of manufacturing. That was said before the stock exchange recession and before the disastrous bank profit figures that arose from the Third world debt were announced.

The world trade in services is only one quarter of that in physical goods and it cannot easily turn to foreign markets if home demand slows. More and more service jobs depend on manufacturing, a point that was made brilliantly by Akio Morita, the chairman of Sony Corporation. Conservative Members have trumpeted the remarks of the Japanese ambassador, Mr. Yamazaki, but

not those of Mr. Morita. His speech in London in late November was summarised in the February issue of the *Director*. I can assure the *Guardian* columnist, who paid me the kind tribute of describing me as Bradford's distinguished Trotskyist, that the *Director*, together with *The Wall Street Journal*, is part of my bedtime reading. Perhaps at my age there is little more I can hope for.

Mr. Morita said:

"There is no doubt that this shift from manufacturing to services is now well advanced in the United States. Since 1950, the United States has lost half of its manufacturing jobs, while three-quarters of all jobs are now service oriented."

So much for the eight million extra jobs in America to which Conservative Members have referred this afternoon.

"The UK trend is similar. What I would like to suggest is that this trend, far from being the matured progression of a maturing economy and something to be encouraged, is destructive. For in the long run an economy that has lost its manufacturing base has lost its vital centre. A service-based economy has no engine to drive it. Thus, complacency about moving from manufacturing to a haven of hi-tech services, where workers sit at computers and exchange information all day, is entirely misplaced.

This is because it is only manufacturing that creates something new, which takes raw materials and fashions them into products that are of more value than the raw materials they are made from. It would seem obvious that the service elements of an economy are subsidiary and dependent upon manufacturing. When manufacturing prospers, all industries connected with it prosper—not only are more components, parts and salesmen needed, but more accountants, more dentists, more gasoline stations, more supermarkets and more schools.

When the manufacturing engine of an economy stalls, all these things are in less demand. You do not build dentists' offices or department stores unless you have a population with the resources to take advantage of them—and these resources in the long run can only come from jobs that *add value* to goods—that is, manufacturing jobs."

That is what Mr. Akio Morita, chairman of the Sony Corporation—one of the world's most successful manufacturing firms—said.

Michael Prouse of the *Financial Times* wrote:

"Future living standards in the UK will depend in large measure on the success of manufacturing. This is both because the sector is the main source of productivity growth and because further substantial improvements in the non-manufacturing trade balance are improbable. The food and raw material balances are unlikely to strengthen further, the fuel balances will deteriorate as North Sea fields mature."

That is a damning condemnation of those who are responsible for the rundown of manufacturing industry in Britain during the past nine years.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer mentioned in passing that the biggest danger to the British economy is a world recession and the volatility of exchange rates. I return to what Mr. Morita said:

"It is perfectly clear that the world economy is now in crisis. The burgeoning federal and trade deficits of the US are still out of control. Three-digit inflation rages throughout the Third World, whose own debt continues to grow unabated. The recent terrible wrenches in the stock market reflect everyone's uncertainty as to what lies ahead. There are cries for protectionist legislation from those who seek easy solutions, while there is a realisation from others that protectionist laws would only smash our system of international trade, quite probably tipping us over into a worldwide recession."

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wall: I should like to, but I have only two minutes.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What is the hon. Gentleman reading?

Mr. Wall: I am reading quotations which I imagine are of interest to anybody who takes a serious interest in the future and our economy.

The trouble is that, for America to solve its problems, it has to cut both its trade and its budget deficits. It can do that only by cutting its trade with the rest of the world. The effect of that in Britain would not be as great as in America or Japan, but it would have an effect. In such circumstances, however, the Japanese and the Americans would seek increased trade in Europe, especially Britain, and that would present a nightmare for the British economy.

In the past nine years, there has been a political, social and economic swing to the Right in British society. I believe that these measures mark the end of the swing. The pendulum will now begin to swing back. We may not swing the vote in the Chamber tonight, but we shall swing the votes in next week's local elections. I warn Conservative Members that their move to the Right will be countered by a move to the Left.

9.9 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): We have had a good debate this evening. I listened with particular interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) who spoke before him and to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) who spoke before him. Therein lies a most interesting aspect of the debate. The Conservative party has no speakers who wish to defend this iniquitous Budget. Indeed, more Labour Back Benchers than Conservative Back Benchers have spoken.

I listened with interest to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), the Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, and to the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). I hope that hon. Members will forgive if I do not reply directly to many of the points that were made, with some of which I agree. I even agree with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith)—and that is saying something. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) made some excellent points, and my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was absolutely right when he said that this is government by the rich, of the rich and for the rich.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) spoke about manufacturing and made the very important point that Budgets should be about the creation of wealth and the creation of income and not just about the distribution of income. This Budget had nothing to say about that. My hon. Friends the Members for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) also made some very useful comments.

In stark contrast to the attitude of some Conservative Members who have been servile to the wishes of the greedy and the super-rich and unrepentant in trying to justify the tax bonanza that has been given away, the Labour party has shown that we are concerned about the lack of finance

[Dr. John Marek]

for the Health Service, the cuts in social security and housing benefit and the increasing number of our citizens who are committed to living in poverty.

Mr. Higgins: Come on.

Dr. Marek: It is not a question of coming on. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) could have made her own speech. She is very good at making interventions from a sedentary position. We could have more respect for her if she intervened correctly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I agree substantially with the Budget that the Government have brought in. What is the point of disagreeing with it?

Dr. Marek: The Budget is iniquitous and certainly needs some defending. It has had a conspicuous lack of defence from Conservative Members, and that speaks for itself.

The Budget does nothing for the unemployed, the ill or the poor. It does nothing for those on average earnings. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster can interrupt from a sedentary position as much as she likes. Her behaviour speaks for itself.

The Budget does nothing for those on average earnings or below average earnings. It is true that the basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 27p in the pound to 25p in the pound, but that has been at the expense of the neglect of our schools over such things as the provision of books, the maintenance of buildings and the availability of good, nutritious and cheap or free school meals. It has been at the expense of our road maintenance programme and at the expense of the National Health Service. In spite of what the right hon. Member for Worthing said, waiting lists are increasing and wards are closing down. Emergency units are refusing admission at certain times to cut costs. Patients are dying for lack of treatment. Above all, the Budget has been at the expense of the poor.

Mr. Higgins: On what conceivable basis can the hon. Gentleman argue that this Budget is at the expense of the Health Service? This year, an extra £1·75 billion will be spent on the Health Service. Next year an extra £1 billion will be spent and another £1 billion will be spent the following year. The hon. Gentleman cannot conceivably argue that more is not being spent on the Health Service.

Dr. Marek: I respect the right hon. Gentleman, who is an expert on finance, but he must agree that simply saying that so much extra in real terms will be spent on the National Health Service is not the end of the story. He must consider the change in the demography of the country and the fact that as a nation we are older. He must have regard to the RPI for medical costs and he must consider the extra costs due to illness because of the doubling and trebling of unemployment. He must consider the fact that the family practitioner committee is not cash-limited and that any extra money it spends must inversely come off the hospital and community health sector budget. He must have regard to all that.

It is not true that the Government have spent more on the National Health Service and that everything is all right. It is not all right. Instead of giving money to the super-rich, the Opposition's charge, as has been demonstrated adequately tonight, is that the Government could have put some of that money into public services and that it is to their shame that they have decided not to do so.

The average man and woman in the street have been hit in two ways by the Chancellor and his Budget. First, their moral integrity has been assaulted because of poverty. Officially, 18 million people are living in poverty.

Sir William Clark: Including children?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The House has suffered long enough from remarks made from a sedentary position. If hon. Members wish to intervene, it is high time that they asked the hon. Member who has the Floor for permission to intervene.

Dr. Marek: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you will allow me to say that that is typical of the loutish tendency of Conservative Members of Parliament.

Sir William Clark: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Marek: I shall allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

Sir William Clark: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Will he explain to the House how he makes out that 18 million people are on the poverty line?

Dr. Marek: These are official Government figures, and the hon. Gentleman can look them up if he wishes.

The second way in which this Chancellor of the Exchequer has hit, in his Budget, the ordinary man and woman in the street——

Sir William Clark: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Marek: I shall allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene for the last time, but I hope that it will not be about those figures. He can look them up; they are available. Children are human beings, the same as adults.

Sir William Clark: Of the 18 million, would the hon. Gentleman be kind enough to say how many are children?

Dr. Marek: I do not know. I could make an estimate, but it would be better for the hon. Gentleman to look up the figure. I apologise to him for not having it. I would not want to mislead him by making an estimate.

Besides assaulting the moral integrity of the average person in the street, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has attempted an enormous act of deception. The average man and woman is told that 2p will come off income tax but the Government do not tell them that that could and should have gone towards rebuilding our public services, the National Health Service and the decaying infrastructure, which is visible everywhere from Land's End to John O'Groats. His attempted deception does not end there. Even reasonably prosperous people do not get very much out of the Budget, a point to which I shall turn later.

It would be sensible to comment on the Chancellor's macroeconomic strategy, as it is obvious that there continues to be an argument between the Chancellor and the Prime Minister over exchange rates and bucking the market. It may have been true to say that the stronger an economy is growing the stronger the pressures of inflation, but that is not true now and it is misleading of the Chancellor so to claim. He claims it by boasting that it is an unusual achievement to have a period of steady growth without any rise in inflation, but any Government's

powers of interference are much more limited now than they were. Importers will readily meet at short notice unfilled demand in the United Kingdom market. That will act as a downward pressure on inflation, but it will also have a horrible effect on our balance of payments.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Marek: Yes, but for the last time.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The CBI statement, referred to by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary when he opened the debate, exactly countered that point by pointing out that we are fulfilling more of the orders that are coming to this country from home production than we are from imports.

Dr. Marek: We might be, but in that case the hon. Lady should explain why the balance of payments problem is getting worse.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Dr. Marek: I shall not give way again. Conservative Members have had a good innings and I hope that they will forgive me. I am sure that the hon. Lady will wish to serve on the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill, when I shall be happy to debate with her at length every point that she seeks to make.

The country's balance of payments is a serious issue that the Chancellor cannot duck for very long, and it should not simply be dismissed in the way that it was by the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir William Clark). I am not attacking him, but the hon. Gentleman said that the balance of payments was a minor matter and did not play a large part in the present economy. I beg to differ with him. It is right that the Opposition should ask the Chancellor what he intends to do, but the only answer in the Budget seems to be that the spending spree about to be undertaken by the super-rich will make matters worse.

The Government have abandoned their monetarist dogma and their primitive belief that inflation can be controlled solely by controlling broad money. I am sure that it is only a matter of time before the Government realise that high interest rates alone are insufficient to control inflation. Last week's money supply figures showed a 20 per cent. increase in broad money, which will give rise to serious problems. It will exacerbate the balance of payments deficit and encourage an increased rate of inflation.

If steps are not taken to correct the balance of payments, there will, some time, be an economic crisis in this country. Interest rates can be kept high to fund the deficit but that means an over-valued pound with consequently fewer exports and an even larger balance of payments deficit. That is a problem not just for the Chancellor but for the whole country. It is something that any responsible Treasury Minister would have addressed by now. It is a pity that the Budget is concerned only with redistributing money to the rich, with greed, with avarice, and with making the rich richer still.

I turn to the Bill's fiscal measures and to the way in which the Tory Administration have treated their citizens over the past nine years or so. How could the Government, when they first came to office, double and then treble the number of those out of work? Even now they preside over an unemployment rate that would have been thought beyond belief 10 years ago.

How could the Government cut the link between the old-age pension and rises in average earnings, so that a pensioner couple are £14 worse off every week than they would have been under a Labour Administration? *[Interruption.]* It is no use Conservative Members complaining, because under a Labour Administration a pensioner couple would be better off.

How is it that the Government have failed more than once fully to uprate child benefit in line with inflation? How is it that they have made unemployment benefit taxable? Earnings-related supplementary benefits have also disappeared. The cost to the Government of single parents as part of income support has just been halved; how can the Government defend that? It is an attack on the poorest sections of society. Board and lodging allowances for the under-25s have also been abolished. The list seems almost endless.

The House will recognise that all that amounts to a well-planned policy by the Treasury of cutting benefits and increasing taxes on the poor in the unsubstantiated belief that it will make the poor grateful to their mistress for the crumbs once the loaf has been taken away. In the recent social security changes, more than 2·25 million people received not a penny more but are worse off because there will be no uprating. Another 2·5 million people will receive an increase, but it will not catch up with, or compensate for, inflation. A further 1 million people will be worse off. In other words, two thirds of the 8·5 million people I mentioned will be poorer as a result of the changes.

On the other hand, a family of four with an income of £100 weekly and claiming family credit and housing benefit will receive only 5p more a week as a result of the tax cuts. The tax cuts may apply to them, but all the other changes will mean they will gain by only 5p a week. That is the measure of the Government's generosity towards some of the poorest sections of society.

I compare those people with others at the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum. Let us consider what will happen to people who already have money and wealth. Without any substantiation being made or attempted, the Government clearly believe that the super-rich need extra money in order to be of more benefit to the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), was right in what he said on that subject.

Let us consider what it implies in respect of the Budget. First, the top rate of tax was cut from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent., which means that half of all the tax cuts went to the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers. The hon. Member for Croydon, South shakes his head. If he does not agree, he should give his figures. With the reduction of income tax from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent., some £2 billion was given to 3·7 per cent. of taxpayers—about 700,000, give or take a few; I am not being absolutely accurate. I am glad to see some measure of agreement from the hon. Member for Croydon, South at last.

Lord Hanson gets £4,728 a week, cash in hand, in notes. Sir Ralph Halpern gets even more: £5,134 a week. *[Interrruption.]* The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is now trying to barrack me. I wonder whether he has any morality at all, and whether he can appreciate what the average old-age pensioner on £40 or £50 a week net thinks of that. The gentleman to whom I referred receives more in a week than old-age pensioners get in a

[Dr. Marek]

year. I do not see much morality in that, and I do not think that any Conservative Member would dare to stand up and justify it now. What evidence is there that the rich need incentives to work harder, and that the poor need to be repressed and taxed harder to work harder? What Conservative Member can justify that?

The hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) said that the tax cuts meant individuals keeping a little more of what is already owned. I do not think that it was their own in the first place. I think that they hijacked it from the companies for which they work—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame!"] I do not think that they earned it. There is no question of Sir Ralph Halpern earning £5,134 a week.

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Dr. Marek: I am sorry; I must make progress. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. Because of all the interventions, I have used up 15 minutes of my speech, and I am only half way through it. I do not wish to take up any of the time available to the Financial Secretary.

Let me bring the facts home to Conservative Members. A single person on 10 times average earnings, earning about £127,000 a year, will receive £369·40 a week in income tax cuts. By contrast, someone on the average income of £244 a week will receive only £4·36 a week. Not many of my constituents earn £244 a week. Many would be glad of that salary. Moreover, that £4·36 a week is at the expense of the National Health Service, the schools and all the other services that the Government should be looking after. This is only the latest in a long line of giveaways to the super-rich.

That is not all. The Tories have decided to cut the top rate of inheritance tax from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent. They have done that despite halving the number of estates liable for the tax over the past two years. In 1986-87, the number was about 39,000; in 1988-89, only 20,000 are expected to pay. But each estate will now benefit by an average of about £30,000. It can readily be seen that that is a measure on behalf of the super-rich. Only 5,200 taxpayers paid inheritance tax at rates above 40 per cent. last year. That demonstrates the length to which the Government will go to please their masters and mistresses.

Capital gains tax cuts will also help the well-off.

Sir William Clark: Who wrote this?

Dr. Marek: I wrote it, and I am prepared to stand by it. The obvious discomfiture of Conservative Members only shows that I am stating some home truths.

There are not many payers of capital gains tax in my constituency. In fact, less than one taxpayer in 100 pays the tax. Yet, again, a large measure of the Finance Bill is concerned with capital gains tax, although only a small section of society pays it.

The Budget has abolished capital gains tax on pre-1982 gains. The Chancellor says, and to some extent I agree with him——

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): It was a tax on Labour inflation.

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman makes the point. He follows the line of the Chancellor at the Dispatch Box a few weeks ago. However, the hon. Gentleman has not thought hard about the problem. In reality, those gains were not just inflationary. There were real gains, especially in the property market. Conservative Members must remember that schedule A tax was abolished in the early 1960s, resulting in real gains in property. For that reason, it is wrong that capital gains tax should not have been completely abolished before 1982. I am glad that Conservative Members are silent on this issue.

Those gains were real gains and what the Chancellor has done in the Budget will not help the ordinary citizen who owns and lives in his or her house, because that has always been exempt from capital gains tax, but it will help —wait for it yet again—the super-rich, the property speculators, and there were plenty of them 20 years ago, and the neo-Rachmans of this world who are about to be given a new lease of life with the changes in the business expansion scheme.

Then there is the disaggregation of investment income for married couples—yet another measure for the super-rich. It is worth as much as £1 billion in all, but only to the very few in Britain who do not make the mistake of thinking that women will have independent taxation. They will not have independent taxation, as can be seen from page 21 of the Finance Bill, which says:

> "If the claimant proves that for the whole or any part of the year of assessment he is a married man whose wife is living with him, he shall be entitled to a deduction from his total income of £1,490."

A relevant paragraph follows later. That talks about the man, not the man or woman. It could have been drafted in such a way that there was equality between the sexes.

The Government maintain that all the giveaways in income tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax are necessary to motivate the rich to work harder or to attract to or keep in Britain the internationally mobile. Our scientists, engineers and researchers do not have the incomes necessary for them to benefit from this Budget. The top scale for university lecturers is about £20,000 a year, and the average salary for a professor is about £28,000 a year. I do not see how such people in our universities will pay top rates of tax and so benefit from the Government's handouts in the Budget.

Even if our scientists and engineers were to benefit from the Budget, it is equipment, resources and funding that are important for their research. That is what will make them stay in Britain, not the amount of money that they get in their pockets as a result of the Budget.

A constituent of mine paid £140 out of his own pocket to attend a day-release course in his spare time. He was made unemployed and the unemployment benefit office paid him for four days a week for about four or five weeks, then stopped his money. He tried to get income support, but was unsuccessful. My constituent had been trying to improve himself, but he was unable to do so because he could not obtain support from the Government.

Contrast that constituent of mine with a reasonably prosperous or average middle-class family with a son or daughter wishing to educate himself or herself. They will have a little more money with which to keep their son or daughter at home. They can even pay for him or her to go to university. But covenants have been stopped, which shows that the Government are not really worried even about the average prosperous family. They have stopped covenants for non-charitable purposes and there is no way that such families can, in a tax-efficient way, help their offspring.

Contrast such people with the super-rich. They will be able to continue to transfer taxable income from a parent to a student by means of a settlement of capital or a capital trust. They will not suffer. The Chancellor leaves them unscathed and again shows clearly that this Government are in favour of the super-rich. They do not care too much about the people on average earnings. They are keen to repress the poor. The Chancellor cannot deny that in the first case I cited, he is intent on keeping the poor in poverty. Where is his sense of fair play with regard to this matter?

The House will not be surprised to learn that there are even more benefits for the super-rich in this Budget. Each spouse will have a separate £40,000 annual limit in the business expansion scheme. The transferable allowances will not just be transferable allowances for earned income. There will be two sets of allowances for capital gains tax exemptions as well.

A further tax dodge for the super-rich will be the two zero-rated band for one family. The really wealthy will be able to pass on wealth on the death of the first spouse. It will not pass to the other spouse, but on to the offspring. That is another tax dodge opened up by this Budget. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members will give me just one more minute, I hope to finish.

There are other points worth noting. There is the rise in electricity prices, which hits the ordinary man in the street. There are the car taxation scale increases—which I support —which hit the average man with a company car and not the really wealthy executive. There is the fact that national insurance has not been made more progressive, that services have been downgraded elsewhere, and that housing benefits have had a capital limit imposed. All these things serve to underline my theme.

This Budget has not reduced the overall burden of taxation; it has merely given vast amounts to a few super-rich at the expense of the poor. In 1988-89 taxes, as a share of GDP, are forecast to remain the same as in 1987-88—37·9 per cent. However, in 1978-79 taxes accounted for just 33·9 per cent. of GDP. Which is the taxing party? It is the Conservative party.

This Budget has done nothing for the poor and the unemployed. It has done precious little for the average man or woman in the street. It has done nothing for industry. Yet this Government have had all the benefits of North sea oil, selling the family silver and obtaining money by crucifying the poor. It is this Government who are the taxing party. The poll tax will be seen to be a Tory tax when the next election comes along.

This Chancellor has the cheek to say that the gap between the rich and poor is not something to be determined. He has determined the gap between the rich and the poor. He is continuing to determine the gap between the rich and the poor in favour of the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor getting poorer. For that reason I hope that all the hon. Members of the Conservative party will join me in voting against this iniquitous and immoral measure tonight.

9.37 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I agree with the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) that this has been an interesting debate. A number of speeches have gone rather wider than the Finance Bill, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), who made a most interesting speech on wider issues, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) will forgive me if I do not comment on some of the points that they made, but comment only on the points about taxation.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) spoke about the interaction between taxation and the economy when he said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was awash with money. He implied that my right hon. Friend had been over-cautious and, perhaps, should have borrowed rather more money as opposed to repaying debt. The hon. Member, with some of his hon. Friends, seemed to show no understanding of how the buoyancy of revenue has been achieved.

The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that he said that other Chancellors had not always found themselves in as fortunate position as my right hon. Friend. He is quite right; Labour Chancellors did not find themselves in the same fortunate position as my right hon. Friend. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing said, it is precisely because we have controlled public expenditure, and we have had tax cuts and measures to improve the supply side in the past, that we are in the fortunate position of having buoyant revenue, which has enabled us to cut taxes and to increase spending.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East may prefer to forget this, but perhaps he will remember when I remind him that he gave himself away when he said from the Dispatch Box that all the tax cuts were due simply to North sea oil and that it was North sea oil that had produced the revenue. North sea oil not only represents under 2 per cent. of revenue, but it has halved since 1985-86, so what the hon. Gentleman said was completely ridiculous.

Other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), made much of the point that the burden of taxation has not been reduced. That is hardly a state secret, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in the Budget that the burden of taxation was not being reduced as a proportion of GDP. Therefore, I find that an interesting point for hon. Members to make.

I agree that we should like the burden of taxation to be reduced further, but two points need to be emphasised. First, the fact that the burden of tax overall in the economy has not been reduced shows precisely what we always say: one can cut tax rates and keep up revenue. Secondly, it shows that Opposition Members do not know which way they are facing because they have opposed every tax cut that has ever been made by this Government.

Mr. Battle: Does the Minister accept that, in the shift from direct to indirect taxation, the burden of indirect taxation falls hardest on the poorest in our society and is grossly unjust?

Mr. Lamont: The answer to that is shown in the figures for take-home pay and living standards, which take account of increases in indirect taxation. Those figures show that in every multiple of average earnings there have been substantial increases in living standards.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) doubted whether this was a reforming Budget. In that, he disagrees with many observers, including, for

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example, *The Independent*, which is not always a supporter of the Conservative party and which, although awarding the prize for tax reform to New Zealand, stated:

"We certainly now have a superior tax system to almost any country in Western Europe."

Yes, tax reforms should be judged by the criteria of equity, but also by simplicity, neutrality and what they do for the supply side of the economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) talked about what has been achieved in terms of simplicity. We have a much simpler system now. We have no tax rate over 40 per cent. We have a single rate of inheritance tax, whereas previously we had seven. Indeed, it requires something of a feat of memory to recall that in 1979 we had no fewer than 11 rates of tax on earned income and a further two rates of tax on investment income. Other changes such as those relating to maintenance and non-charitable covenants will also greatly simplify the system.

When it comes to neutrality, I again suggest that much more has been done than Opposition Members have acknowledged.

I believe that the strategy should be to reduce marginal rates, increase incentives and increase average rates by blocking artificial loopholes. Opposition Members have not woken up to some of the provisions in the Bill that block some of those loopholes. We have heard about forestry and cars. I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham said that he felt that we should increase that tax even further.

Other steps have been taken which should be close to the hearts of Opposition Members. We have increased the tax on golden handshakes, and we have increased the tax on capital gains for higher rate payers. We have also reduced markedly the incentive to convert income into capital, which was one of the greatest avoidance devices. We have increased the tax on share options for higher rate payers. Normally one simply needs to mention share options to get the Opposition jumping up and down like a lot of war-fevered dervishes.

The alignment of capital gains tax with income tax was not mentioned by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East or by the hon. Member for Wrexham, or by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) when he spoke the other day. The Opposition have not once mentioned the alignment of capital gains and income tax.

I confess that perhaps the silence of those sitting behind me shows that the rapture of my hon. Friends for the measure is somewhat modified, but when it was introduced, I should have thought that Opposition Members would cheer it to the rafters. It sharply reduces the incentive for the better-off to arrange matters to their own convenience. The fact that Opposition Members did not mention it shows all too clearly that they are determined to caricature the Budget and to make it fit their image rather than describe what it really does.

I agree very much, once again, with my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham that many of the accountants who have been employed, I dare say gainfully, in converting income into capital will find something more productive to do elsewhere.

Another measure of reform is that of independent taxation, which again the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East chose to dismiss. He implied that the measure, and indeed the Budget as a whole, is just for pipe-smoking rich women. The Opposition do not seem to realise that this radical step towards independent taxation is of benefit to millions of ordinary people. The hon. Gentleman concentrated his remarks on women with large investment incomes, but does he not think that there is an important principle here? Is it not wholly wrong, in all the circumstances, that a woman's income should be aggregated with that of her husband and, if so, is the hon. Gentleman for or against it or does he think that the principle can be divided?

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is not only equivocal on the principle but wholly wrong on the facts. The facts are that married women with small incomes from savings will gain, and 1·2 million wives with incomes of less than £5,000 will gain. The elderly will be major beneficiaries of this measure, and about 900,000 elderly wives who are almost all on low incomes will gain from the disaggregation of savings. A considerable number of pensioners who have earned their pensions through their husbands' contributions will also gain.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) raised the question, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham, why the married couple's allowance was not given to whom the couple chose. It has already been explained that that would certainly delay the implementation of our reform, and a good feature of the reform is that it will be implemented in 1990, which advances the date previously thought possible. Although I recognise the validity in principle of what my hon. Friend says, and perhaps the problem can be addressed one day, in only a tiny number of families—about 0·25 per cent.—will the wrong result be achieved by our proposals in the Bill.

Several Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, criticised and repeated their hostility to the business expansion scheme. It was all very different from the reaction of the Leader of the Opposition two years ago when we expanded the scheme. Then, he thought that it was very good.

I should have thought that hon. Gentlemen would welcome the limitation and capping of the size of project that can be financed by the scheme. We have undertaken the measure for precisely the reason that Opposition Members have criticised it in the past: there have been too many asset-backed investments of a kind that could easily get finance from the capital market.

We make no apology for extending the business expansion scheme to encourage investment in rented property. We need a supply of decent rented property. Other countries in Europe have a large amount of it, and it is only the dogma and political threat from the Labour party that has prevented us from establishing it.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister was not in the Chamber earlier. Is he aware that the regional CBI in the north-east of England is bitterly opposed to the scheme to extend the BES to rented accommodation and wants the money spent on jobs in the north of England?

Mr. Lamont: I do not know what the regional CBI feels, but I remain firmly in favour of this measure because we need a supply of decent rented accommodation.

At present, for many local authorities, choice, where it exists, is in the hands of bureaucrats. That is how Opposition Members prefer it. They prefer planners to choose the location, architects to determine the style and

the housing department to determine the number of rooms. When one want to move or take up a new job, there is a waiting list, complexities and delay in arranging a transfer. The country needs to encourage rented property; that is in the interests of all British people.

This Bill is unambiguously for tax cuts and growth. Britain now has one of the lowest tax regimes in the world. Overnight we have become more competitive and a better place in which to do business. The point on which Opposition Members seem to be mostly silent is that the previous cuts in the higher rates, which were larger than those in this Budget, have more than paid for themselves. The top 1 per cent. of taxpayers, 3 per cent., 5 per cent. or even all higher rate payers are paying a higher proportion of income tax than they did in 1979, and they will continue to do so after this Budget.

In that sense, higher earners as a class are more heavily taxed than previously. When Opposition Members say that the rich should shoulder a greater proportion of tax, they should face the fact that that is precisely what has happened. We have cut top rate taxes and we have generated more revenue. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East put this down simply to people paying themselves more, and he produced some extraordinary statistic that the top 5 per cent. had increased their salaries by 300 per cent. A more accurate figure would have been 30 per cent., which is not out of line with the general rise in living standards for most of the population.

The Opposition can never understand that. They always view wealth as finite, so they are interested only in its distribution, never in its creation. They want wealth, yet they hate wealth creators. A few weeks ago we had many newspaper articles about the 200 wealthiest millionaires in the country. What struck me was how many of those people had started their business or expanded it, and how many represented new names in our high streets. Hon. Members have referred to them and the high salaries that they command, but we have not heard of the jobs that they have created or the businesses that they have started.

It has been pointed out that many countries are moving towards lower taxation at the top end. Fewer and fewer countries equate social justice with confiscatory marginal rates. Why do Opposition Members think that the United States, New Zealand and Australia are all following the policy that we are following? Presumably because they, like us, believe that confiscatory taxes are counter-productive and easily evaded. They, too, believe that lower taxes increase competitiveness, attract managers, encourage entrepreneurs and create new businesses. Opposition Members do not believe that. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that there was no study, survey or academic research to show it, but there is. That is not the point. *[Interruption.]* The evidence is all around us. It is in the tax cuts that we made in 1979 and in the United States.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, when he makes such remarks, reminds me of the Bishop of Durham, who, when he was opposing the deregulation of buses, said that he was against it as an act of faith. Good Lord, whatever next?

Mr. John Smith: The hon. Gentleman reminded us that there was an academic study. Will he tell us what it was and what it concluded?

Mr. Lamont: I was referring to Professor Lindsay; the right hon. and learned Gentleman perhaps had in mind Professor Brown. That simply shows that there are two studies, not one, and that one is worth while and one is not.

The Opposition do not understand about wealth creation. The British people know that they do not understand. We know that they do not understand. Furthermore, they themselves, in their heart of hearts, know that they do not understand.

I was fascinated to read in *The Guardian* earlier this week about the leaked document from the Labour co-ordinating committee, of which the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Dagenaham (Mr. Gould) are members:

> "The state of political education in the party and the trade unions is appalling. Many party activists are positively hostile to the idea that the party should have something to say about productivity, competitiveness, efficiency or enterprise."

Those are wise words, and there are even wiser words to come, because it goes on:

> "In so far as the electorate remembers Labour's rule in the Seventies, they associate the decade with economic crisis, strikes and hyper-inflation. In contrast, Thatcherism projects an image of economic strength."

Those are wise and realistic words. We should simply like to see them followed up by wiser policies from the Opposition.

The Opposition, particularly the hon. Member for Wrexham, keep contrasting the gains from this Budget for the highest paid with losses from the social security reform, as he puts it, for those on the lowest incomes. They assume that tax and social security are just alternative ways for Government to confer benefits on people. But the two are not the same. The tax system is there not to give people benefits but to take money from them in a way that does the least damage to the economy. The object of reductions in tax rates is to improve the performance of the economy by encouraging and rewarding enterprise. The reason is that if one encourages enterprise one will get more of it. The evidence is that this is precisely what has happened since this Government first began cutting taxes in 1979.

Opposition Members remind us of the poorest, and they have a right to do that, but their case would be more persuasive if occasionally they reminded us that there is also quite a bit of prosperity around as well, and a lot more prosperity than when they were in office. They used statistics and language as though they were describing Ethiopia rather than England, but much of the prosperity has reached the poor as well. Yes, the rich have got richer, but many of the poor have also become better off.

The real take-home pay of a single person on half average earnings has gone up by 26 per cent. under this Government. Under Labour, it fell. What happened to the burden of tax for the lowest paid under Labour? The Labour Government increased the number of taxpayers by 10 per cent. They brought into tax almost 3 million low-paid people who had not paid tax before. How can they claim to be the guardians of the poor when they wrecked and bankrupted our economy and it was the poor who suffered most?

This Bill cuts by significant amounts taxes for all taxpayers. The Opposition scoff at 2p off the basic rate, but I do not remember when the Labour Government were ever able to cut tax by 2p in the pound. Twenty-three million people will benefit from the basic rate cut; 750,000 people will be taken out of taxation. When the Opposition say that this Budget is predominantly a Budget for the rich, they should remember that 75 per cent. of the cost of

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the changes in the Budget has gone on basic rate and allowances. They used to have a 25p reduced rate band. We have got everyone on 25p and eventually we will get everyone on 20p.

The British people have rejected the politics of redistribution because they were tried and have failed. They want growth rather than redistribution because that will do most for the poor and give the greatest opportunity to the majority of the people. This is a Finance Bill for all the people, whatever they earn and wherever they live.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 251, Noes 201.

Division No. 277] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*

Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

FINANCE (No. 2) BILL (COMMITTAL)

Ordered,

That clauses Nos. 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 31, 42, 49, 91, 98, 127 and 128 and schedule 7 be committed to a Committee of the whole House;

That the remainder of the Bill be committed to a Standing Committee;

That, when the provisions of the Bill considered, respectively, by the Committee of the whole House and by the Standing Committee have been reported to the House, the Bill be proceeded with as if the Bill had been reported as a whole to the House from the Standing Committee. —*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Nuclear Missiles (Inspections)

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move,

That the draft Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (Inspections) (Privileges and Immunities) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 28th March, be approved.

The order is to be made under section 1(2) of the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Act 1988 and was laid before the House in draft on 21 March. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has considered the order and made no comment other than to draw the attention of Parliament to the explanatory note prepared for the Committee by the Foreign Office. As the House knows, the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Act is principally concerned with the granting of diplomatic privileges and immunities to observers and inspectors carrying out functions in the United Kingdom under the terms of the Stockholm agreement, but it also provides for the extension by means of an Order in Council of such privileges and immunities to inspection personnel involved in other future arms control agreements.

The Government made it clear at the time that the INF treaty was one such agreement for which recourse to this provision of the Act was envisaged. The verification provisions of the INF treaty are detailed, as befits an agreement of its importance. One of its essential features is that United States and Soviet inspectors, while fully complying with the terms of inspection protocol and respecting the sovereignty, laws and regulations of the countries in which they operate, should be able to carry out their functions effectively. Hence the requirement for diplomatic privileges and immunities which this Order in Council is designed to provide.

The aim of the order is to enable the British Government to fulfil the obligations that we have undertaken in respect of the verification of the INF treaty. The House is familiar with the nature of those obligations and the reasons why they take the form they do, and I shall not rehearse the background again now. Suffice it to say that the basing country agreement that we and other NATO partners have signed with the United States and the exchange of notes with the Soviet Union contain comprehensive and detailed provisions defining the basis on which access is permitted for INF inspections and protecting the United Kingdom's sovereign rights on our territory.

The privileges and immunities to be conferred on Soviet inspectors and aircrew for the protection of their official functions when conducting INF inspections will cover only activities carried out in the United Kingdom. That is for the period from their arrival at the point of entry until their departure from the United Kingdom. The Order in Council also confers certain privileges and immunities on the equipment and aircraft used by the INF inspectors and aircrew. Naturally, those privileges and immunities are no more extensive than those required under the basing country agreement——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I do not want to be pedantic, but the order refers to

"Inspectors and aircrew members"

and goes on:

"except articles the import or export of which is prohibited by law or controlled by quarantine regulations".

Surely that implies some sort of basic inspections; or have I got it wrong?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is as perspicacious as always. He is absolutely right. We are entitled to exercise the normal controls even over people who come on official visits, just as we do with other visitors. For instance, the list of people must be submitted to us and we would have the right to object if we chose.

The privileges and immunities that are conferred are no more extensive than those required under the basing country agreement and they correspond directly to the privileges and immunities annex to the basing country agreement, which has been in the Library for some time. That reproduced verbatim the relevant parts of the protocol between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nor do the privileges and immunities exceed those conferred by the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations.

The United States Senate will vote on the ratification of the INF treaty in the next few weeks. There has been extensive debate there and, indeed, throughout the rest of the NATO Alliance on the merits of the treaty and its verification and inspection provisions. All the indications that we have are that the vote in the Senate will be overwhelmingly in favour of the treaty. We expect United States and Soviet instruments of ratification to be exchanged during the President's visit to Moscow at the end of May.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I strongly support the order, but can my hon. and learned Friend explain why it is wise to take this step before the United States Senate has voted on the ratification? If, perchance and unhappily, the vote there goes the wrong way, we shall have ratified an order which is unnecessary.

Mr. Mellor: Parliamentary time does not permit this to be done and later if the treaty comes into force, as it is likely to do, immediately after the President and Mr. Gorbachev have exchanged the instruments of ratification. The treaty comes into force as soon as that is done. The order has to go to the Privy Council. If the treaty does not come into force, the House will have wasted one and a half hours. It wastes a lot of time, and an extra hour and a half will probably not make much difference.

The order will enable us to fulfil our part of the obligations in respect of the treaty as soon as it comes into force. On that basis, I commend it to the House.

10.21 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): It goes without saying that we welcome the order, just as we welcome the treaty from which it flows. We welcome the Bill which led to the order and we, unlike many Conservative Members, have been real enthusiasts for arms control and disarmament measures. We congratulated the President and the General Secretary when the treaty was signed and, all along, we have been keen supporters of this and other aspects of nuclear disarmament.

This is a fascinating order. It is important in itself and for its details, but it also raises the issue of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty. Since the day it was signed in Washington, there have been developments to which the House's attention should be drawn.

On page 22 of the protocol referred to in the order regarding immunities and privileges for inspectors, subsection 6 of item VI states the general rules for conducting inspections, which I consulted in some detail. An interesting phenomenon occurs there. We learn there —we did not learn it from the Minister—that the Red Army inspectors and their aircrew

"shall be allowed to travel within 50 kilometres from the inspection site with the permission of the in-country escort".

The size of the party can range between 10 and 30, accompanied by a maximum of 10 aircrew, who presumably will have to drive along the M4 as well as pilot the aeroplane from Moscow airport. Subsection 6 also says that the party

"shall be accompanied by the in-country escort."

It goes on:

"Such travel shall be taken solely as a leisure activity."

I took the trouble of getting a map of the south of England—an area of the country of which I am not vividly aware. That circle of 50 km takes in the countryside from Oxford to Southampton, from Swindon to Reading, and includes the constituency of the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), who is the chairman of the Conservative 1922 committee, and the constituency of the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison), who is the vice-chairman of that committee, as well as other outposts of civilisation such as Beaconsfield, Chippenham, Salisbury and Aldershot.

Mr. Mellor: I do not want to take up much of the hon. Gentleman's valuable time. He has raised a point of such obscurity that I did not know about it. Apparently, he spent time reading when he could have been eating porridge. The ruling applies only to continuous monitoring inspection and will not apply to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robertson: That is not the case. I cannot believe that that would be the intention of Her Majesty's Government and of the civil servants who so fortuitously supplied that bit of information to the Minister, who should be eating humble pie. I do not understand why Soviet Red Army escorts and inspectors should be denied the opportunity of going to Guildford and Swindon. The protocol says:

"Such travel shall be taken solely as a leisure activity."

We look forward to the interchange of Red Army and United States air forces fighting over the pubs of southern England.

Those inspectors, enjoying the immunities and privileges accorded by the order, will be ensuring compliance with a treaty explicitly designed to eliminate —I emphasise the word "eliminate"—an entire class of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missiles with a killing range of between 500 km and 5,500 km. We are told that that was the successful culmination of a process known as the twin-track decision of 1979 pursuing the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles as a means of stopping and reversing the deployment of Soviet SS20 land-based missiles on our continent.

In the autumn, flags flew and bands played in Washington, the signatures were appended, and according to the famous words of Mr. Larry Speakes, the world was a little safer as a consequence. Even the Prime Minister, who departed the moment that the Minister came to the Dispatch Box, concluded that that was a historic arms control measure. *[Interruption.]* The idea that the Prime Minister trusts anybody, least of all the Minister, is a matter of considerable speculation. Perhaps she trusts him in the House, but I do not think that she will allow him out of the country again.

The architect of an historic arms control measure—the world's first and only nuclear disarmament treaty—reckoned without the cynicism of the military minds and their political shadows who never believed in the negotiating back of the twin-track decision and merely wanted an excuse to fill in yet another rung in the ever-extending ladder of escalation with yet another breed of unusable mass extermination weapons. Having disposed of cruise, Pershing II and all the SS20s, out of the backwoods they troop, led by the Prime Minister, waving the flag of modernisation in front of them to hide the new parade of nuclear artillery that they intend to inflict on the world. That is the real tragedy of the present disarray within NATO.

Instead of celebrating the new treaty and the progress that it represents in reducing the threat from Euro-missiles and instead of taking the progress and getting rid of the existing unstable and dangerous short-range battlefield nuclear weapons across Europe, we are now to engage in a new western internal battle over what new weaponry can cover the targets in the East, so recently relieved from that threat.

Out of the NATO council's 1983 communiqué from Montebello comes a blizzard of interpretations of the word "modernisation." Chancellor Kohl and a range of German opinion, that extends from the far Left of the SPD and the Greens to Franz Josef Strauss, have no intention of putting Germany, either West or East, back in the killing fields, by not just updating the battlefield Lance missile that Lord Carrington said, referring to modernisation, would simply make them

"less destructive in power but more accurate"

but by doubling or nearly trebling their range so that the missiles will be within spitting distance of the limits laid down by the INF treaty, whose provisions we are to reinforce tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and I have just returned from a trip to East and West Germany. We can vouch for the considerable feeling there about being landed, yet again, within range of those short-range missiles. Even President Mitterrand supports Chancellor Kohl and the Germans. Only our Prime Minister stands alone, as ever, isolated in her hawkishness, ready to embrace any and every additional nuclear pipe dream that the military can invent.

In resisting the third zero and implacably opposing the chance to abolish battlefield weapons, which can hit only the two Germanys—hence their understandable lack of enthusiasm for their modernisation at this stage—the Prime Minister hands a major propaganda weapon to the Soviet Union and at the same time loses the chance to reduce a clear and overwhelming Soviet superiority in this area.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that the Soviet Union is modernising its nuclear weapons?

Mr. Robertson: The right hon. Gentleman knows from his experience that the Soviet Union has 1,400 missiles in this class, compared with only 88 Lance missile launchers in the West. A third zero option would remove a 14:1 Soviet superiority. If we took up the chance of the third

[Mr. Robertson]

zero, we should eliminate the Soviet Union's modernisation of that generation of missiles. We are looking a gift horse in the mouth and handing to the Soviet Union a major propaganda victory.

The Prime Minister was quoted in *Die Welt* a couple of weeks ago as telling a

"small group of listeners in Brussels"

that British troops on the Continent must not be "stripped of their clothes." They, with their 88 Lance launchers, are facing an array of 1,400 short-range battlefield Soviet missiles, yet they are to be stripped of their clothes, if we agree to the third zero option.

If resistance to an agreement on battlefield weapons kills the spirit of INF, much worse is afoot to undermine and subvert the INF treaty. However much the Montebello decision on modernisation is perverted and misinterpreted, the sudden appearance on the agenda of a new air-launched stand-off missile—a cruise missile carried half the distance to target by a plane—clearly circumvents the INF treaty.

Even the otherwise enthusiastic nuclear supporters in *The Economist* on 19 March asked:

"Is modernisation a dodge? The air launch cruise missile, when its range is added to that of the delivering aircraft, raises a half-justified eyebrow."

That is the understatement of this part of the decade. Of course it does more than that. On 26 January the Secretary of State for Defence said that the Montebello decision

"related to updating and modernising the existing nuclear weapons."—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1988; Vol. 126, c. 155.]

I emphasise the words "existing nuclear weapons".

Any stand-off, air-launched cruise missile would be a new, untried generation of weapon. In no way can its development and our own agreement with the French to proceed with a joint development—reputedly reached in December 1987 between the Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), and M. Andre Giraud, the temporary French defence Minister—be seen, nor should it or will it be seen, as being modernising existing weapons, because they are the invention of brand new weapons themselves.

On 21 March, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces stated in a written answer that SACEUR was recommending

"the depolyment of a tactical air-to-surface missle."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. *8*.]

That is a volte-face on what was said by the Secretary of State. Speculation in the press yesterday and today, and answers given at Question Time today by the Secretary of State for Defence suggest that such a missile plan is on the table for the Nuclear Planning Group in Brussels today.

The consideration of those new, powerful, long-range missiles is clearly and unmistakably a circumvention of the INF treaty. In this debate of all debates we should condemn it for the dangerous and fraudulent evasion of responsibilities to the world that it represents.

The inspectors coming to this country with the diplomatic protection and immunities that the order will confer will be visible evidence in the leafy lanes of temporarily Tory southern England of the capacity of political will to triumph over mindless logic. A move towards sanity and safety was started by President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev in Reykjavik and it came to fruition in the form of the INF treaty in Washington. It could and should have started an escalation of arms control deals for which the world is crying out. Instead, the constant belligerents, with whom the Prime Minister is in the front rank, are not trying to find ways of evading and undermining any progress made and of rebuilding stockpiles and systems.

Meanwhile, in all the forums of disarmament throughout the world, no real progress is being made. The chemical weapons talks are bogged down because the Americans object to the reasonable verification provisions that the Minister's own Government have proposed. The conventional stability talks have been halted before they even started because the unrealistic conditions laid down sharply hinder the dialogue—a dialogue that could easily provide answers to many problems.

The non-existent talks on a comprehensive test ban treaty have been aborted by those who want better and better, bigger and bigger, and more and more accurate and nastier weapons. The anti-ballistic missile treaty—the last major arms and nuclear control treaty—is under a microscope as people squabble about the minutiae of interpretation, simply to justify one president's obsession with an unworkable and expensive system, which can lead only to escalation of the arms race.

Our debate might have been a cause for celebration and for welcoming the Red Army inspectors who have come, not for war but to ensure peace. It is sad that they have come amidst squandered chances of making a safer world for us all.

10.39 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I am sorry that the Opposition had to be so churlish in their welcome of the document. I know that it must be rather bitter for them to accept that the first step in the reduction of the nuclear armouries of East and West should be the result of the Government's efforts, but that is the fact of the matter, and it would behove them better and do them more honour to give credit where credit is due. Any reduction in the nuclear armoury of the world must be to the good of all the people of the world, and I feel that party politics should be left out of the matter.

However, there is a second reason for my welcoming this draft statutory instrument. It is one more step along the road of arms reduction that started with the signing of the INF treaty in Washington last December by President Reagan and Secretary-General Gorbachev. As I told the House in a previous debate, I was given a conducted tour of RAF Greenham Common earlier this year, and was shown by the United States officers the three areas of the base that will be open to the Soviet inspection team who will be coming to verify the departure of cruise missiles.

I was told about the Portakabin-type structures which were being built for the Soviet aircrew—estimated to comprise 10 people—and for the five inspection teams of two inspectors each. I was told that the inspection teams would have the right to inspect any room in the three areas within the base which could house an object 11 ft long and 21 in in diameter: in other words, a cruise missile. They would also have the right to look into the hangars in which the missiles are currently stored. I was also told that as soon as the treaty had been ratified by the United States Senate and the Supreme Soviet, the Russian team could be expected between 30 and 90 days later. I welcome the indication from my hon. and learned Friend that that ratification is now imminent.

I was further told that, when the reduction in cruise missiles begins, they will go—one flight of missiles plus launcher vehicles at a time—from Greenham to the Davies Montham air force base in Arizona, where they will be met by another Soviet verification team responsible for seeing them cut up. The missiles will be split down the middle; the wings will be clipped off and crushed, and the warhead immobilised. The launch vehicle will be cut up and the guidance system removed. That is what will happen when the INF treaty comes into effect.

In this brief debate, I wish to raise some questions that arise, at least in my mind, directly from the statutory instrument and the agreement. I am immediately struck by the fact that neither the agreement nor the instrument refers to intermediate-range nuclear missiles; both refer simply to intermediate-range missiles. Similarly, they both refer to shorter-range missiles, the word "nuclear" being left out.

I was of the opinion that INF stood for "intermediate-range nuclear forces". I wonder why the word "nuclear", which seems so crucial, has been omitted. If I understand the significance of the words as currently printed, both the agreement and the statutory instrument relate to any missiles, whether they have nuclear or conventional warheads.

Mr. Mellor *indicated assent.*

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister confirms that. It seems to make the treaty far more wide-reaching. By the same token, there seems to be no reference to whether the missiles should be land-based, sea-based or air-based. Again, we seem to be ruling out all those missiles, conventional or nuclear, whether based on land, sea or air.

Perhaps I have not understood the document correctly. In that case, I ask my hon. and learned Friend to say something about this when he winds up the debate. But in the papers before us tonight there is no definition of the word "missile", or of the limitations to the statement relating to intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles.

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend. The answer is that the payload that missiles carry is quite another matter. It is the missiles themselves, as we have already determined, that are treaty-limited. I would say, on my hon. Friend's other point, that it is wrong to look for definitions in this document. This document is a subsidiary document. The document before the House is simply to permit us to facilitate the inspections of the two facilities. For the real definitions, we have to go to the master treaty itself.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that guidance. I thought when I picked up the document, which described itself as "the Agreement", that that was in fact a definitive document. Therefore, what he has said is most useful guidance.

May I return to the statutory instrument, and ask whether my hon. Friend would clarify these words in subsection 2 of clause (1), at page 2:

"that a person refused continued recognition by the United Kingdom as being entitled to privileges and immunities under the circumstances provided for in article IV, paragraph 4 of the Agreement shall thereupon cease to be regarded for the purpose of this Order as an inspector or aircrew member, as the case may be."

Do those words mean that the United Kingdom has the power to refuse diplomatic entry to either a Soviet inspector or aircrew member—and I am quoting from the agreement—

"if they have ever committed a criminal offence in the United Kingdom, or been sentenced for committing such an offence, or been expelled from the UK".

Would it also apply, if one of those people, either in the inspection team or in the aircrew, was a person who had been guilty of those same offences in any other NATO country, or at least in countries which are signatories to the treaty? It appears to me that it would simply relate to whether the person concerned had been guilty of an offence in the United Kingdom. I must say that, if one of the members of the Soviet inspection team had been expelled from another NATO country—for the sake of argument, for spying—I would consider him an unwelcome guest at RAF Greenham Common. I wonder, therefore, whether it is more embracing than appears to be the case.

What if a Soviet inspector or aircrew member misbehaves at Greenham or at Molesworth? Suppose, for example, he is caught taking photographs of something outside those three areas to which I have already referred. Does the United Kingdom have the right to insist that such a person shall be asked to leave, or would that be a matter for the Governments of the United States and the Soviet Union? Again, that does not seem entirely clear from the documents before us.

By the same token, because the aircraft bringing the Soviet team is not subject to our Customs procedures, and

[Mr. McNair-Wilson]

to those responsible for quarantine, what would be the position of a member of a Soviet aircrew if he brought in a pet animal and kept it in a cage, or, in the case of a dog, he allowed it to stay in the aeroplane but it ran outside the aircraft? Would he come within the quarantine rules or do those rules apply only if the Soviet inspectors and aircrew leave Greenham Common and go outside the base area?

Those are just a couple of questions that have occurred to me from the statutory instrument, which I hope my hon. Friend will be able to answer. They are very small and insignificant points when set against the consequences of this document. I would not wish them in any way to detract from the great importance which I place upon this instrument.

10.48 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I welcome the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Act 1988 under which this statutory instrument is made and I welcome the statutory instrument. I suspect that all the members of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments who have reported the measure would also extend a welcome to it.

The Joint Committee has reported the measure simply on the grounds of elucidation. There is no criticism of, indeed there is implied praise for, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office because it provided the Joint Committee with a memorandum with the statutory instrument and we thought it of sufficient use to other Members that it should be printed and drawn to the attention of the House in our 21st report, which was published on 29 March.

Because the procedure for the statutory instrument is fairly unusual and invokes the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964, which implements the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations, we thought it useful that the table provided by the Foreign Office, which shows the articles of the draft order, the parallel article in the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations and the section of the basing country agreement which was provided in a table at the end, should be made available in addition to the rest of the memorandum. I hope that the House thinks that that is a useful sort of reference. The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) might wish to refer to it at his leisure as a useful guide which would otherwise not be available.

I want to speak for two or three minutes on something which has nothing to do with the Joint Committee because the Joint Committee does not consider the merits of a statutory instrument. It considers only whether, for example, the Government have exceeded their powers and whether in this case something needs elucidation in order to help the House and other members of the public.

The hon. Member for Newbury was rather churlish about my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). He clearly welcomed the measure, but it covers only about 4 per cent. of nuclear warheads and therefore cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be seen as other than a beginning on the road to nuclear disarmament. That is a road for which the Labour party has been arguing for many years, so we welcome it when the Soviet Union and the United States embark on an agreement which, of necessity, invokes the United Kingdom because some of the missiles are stationed here.

We very much welcome demonstrations at Greenham Common and Molesworth—which I have joined—to protest about the presence of those missiles here. When negotiations produce an agreement, and subsequently a statutory instrument, which provides for the verification of the dismantling and removal of those missiles, we welcome them enthusiastically.

The Government try to claim credit, but the credit really belongs to the United States and the Soviet Union. The Government should recognise that the initiative was taken by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Mellor: A farrago of nonsense.

Mr. Cryer: The Prime Minister described Mr. Gorbachev as a bold and courageous leader when she met him at Brize Norton. She has taken a different view of him since, but none the less she praised Mr. Gorbachev for taking this sort of initiative. That should be recognised.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that, if Britain had followed the Labour party's policy and got rid of the missiles in Britain in a one-sided manner, the Russians would have responded by saying, "Absolutely splendid. We shall throw away ours too."?

Mr. Cryer: When the right hon. Gentleman was a Minister in the Ministry of Defence his view was that the Russians were ready to come and take us over. That view is not shared by other people; it is not shared by me. Therefore, the argument is clearly that if we had got rid of cruise missiles first, that would not have impeded the Soviet Union in its quest for negotiated agreements. *[Interruption.]* The Government Chief Whip says that all this talk is silly. I must ask him and the Minister, if this talk is silly, and if all nations want or need nuclear weapons in order to stave off the threat of the Soviet Union, why was the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty signed by 133 non-nuclear nations? Under the treaty those nations are pledged not to manufacture or deploy nuclear weapons. Why do that number of nations worldwide take that stance if it is silly for us to do so? Is it not silly for them to do so? That question has never been satisfactorily answered.

Does the Minister agree that that statutory instrument and the arrangements for inspection, dismantling, general verification and removal of cruise missiles will help to strengthen and reinforce the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which has been signed by 133 non-nuclear nations? If the Minister thinks that, and he agrees that the statutory instrument is a step towards strengthening that treaty and persuading those nations not to follow our example and manufacture and deploy nuclear weapons, does he not think that that step would be even further reinforced by the cancellation of Trident, which increases our nuclear power by 4 per cent. to 10 per cent.?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the instrument. Perhaps he would contain his remarks.

Mr. Cryer: Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall conclude this section by saying that the parallel is very clear. I am interested in the Minister's comments, because

I am sure that he recognises the importance of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, as he recognises the importance of the statutory instrument, and he would not wish to prejudice the United Nations agreement.

My next point concerning modernisation was also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton from the Front Bench. We welcome the fact that the Minister has put the statutory instrument before the House, but we have strong reservations about moves by the Prime Minister to undertake modernisation. They seem to many people to be a replacement by other means of the cruise missiles that are being removed by the very means set out in the statutory instrument. Therefore, we must express clearly to the Minister our objection to modernisation. It is an act of very bad faith by the Government and is against the aims and objectives of the United States and Soviet Union in the agreement.

The statutory instrument and its associated agreement, which is available from the Vote Office, set out the terms and conditions in great detail. The hon. Member for Newbury said that he is not quite clear about one or two things. Perhaps that is partly because the instrument and the agreement are so detailed and make every visitor the subject of such scrutiny.

The immunities and privileges can be withdrawn, and rightly so. But I must ask the Minister whether he is satisfied that the Visiting Forces Act 1952, which allows 30,000 United States soldiers here a fair amount of immunity, for example from our legal system, should not be reviewed in the light of this sort of treaty and statutory instrument, with the aim of reducing the immunities and privileges. They were granted far too widely in a moment of cold war tension, by a Government who had not taken the people into their confidence fully at the time.

I accept that the process started by a Labour Government, but the legislation was embarked upon by a Conservative Government in 1952. I accept that there was a consensus view of the cold war, although it was not entirely shared by the whole of the Labour party. Is it not time for a review in the light of discussions that have resulted in an agreement and in this statutory instrument, which lays down certain conditions?

We welcome the measure, but those of us on the Labour Benches will be working very hard to press the Government to go further down this road of nuclear disarmament. More important, so too will the millions of people who recognise that nuclear expenditure is wasteful and potentially disastrous, and who want to get rid of Trident.

11 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I do not know anything that will bring home so clearly to the British people the immense achievement of the INF agreement than the arrival of Russian service men engaged in inspecting the bases of the United States air force. That fact—a remarkable one when one considers the history of the past 30 years—is by any measure a dramatic achievement which, I would think, would receive the unanimous support of the House.

The headquarters of the United States third air force is in my constituency. Of my constituents, 23,000 are Americans, and I have known them intimately for the past 25 years while I have had the pleasure to be in the House. In a sense, this treaty is a tribute to them, for they have contributed the essential portion of the Western nuclear deterrent which has brought the Soviets to the conference table.

I have some experience in this. When I worked for Mr. Macmillan at No. 10 Downing street, I was a modest observer of his achievement when, as Prime Minister, he went to Moscow and broke the mould of the cold war. There followed from that the first test ban treaty, signed by Lord Hailsham. Following that, work was done on the Antarctic treaty. This is not the first but the second denuclearising treaty, for there was agreement on preventing the establishment in the Antarctic of nuclear weapons many years ago. There was the work done by Lord Mulley—I pay tribute to him—who, among others, worked for a Labour Government and went a long way towards achieving an agreement on nuclear weapons, which still unfortunately eludes us. Most of all, there is this intermediate treaty.

Over the decades, the one common theme in all these efforts to achieve a measure of balanced and credible disarmament has been the policy so well expressed by Churchill when he said, "We arm to parley." The whole object of Western policy has been to maintain our strength in order to provide a deterrent, not for war but for peace. If anything has been demonstrated by this treaty, it is that that policy is now paying off.

In what I hope is an uncontentious speech, I must say that it would have served neither our country nor the cause of world peace so well if we had taken the advice of those, not necessarily on the Labour Front Bench, who would have had us, the Americans and British alike, abandon our nuclear weapons in the hope that the Soviets would follow suit. There is no evidence to support that; the evidence is that by arming to parley we have achieved a result.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): If the hon. Gentleman's theory is that we have armed to parley, how is it that we end up with more arms at the end of the parley than when we started?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: There is no theory about it; we have armed, we have parleyed, and we have achieved a result. I hope that the whole House will welcome that.

I wish to comment on the practical aspects of this, following on from my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), who has Greenham Common in his area, just as I have Mildenhall and Lakenheath in mine. The task of maintaining the American bases and providing for cruise missiles has never been easy. It has fallen to me all too often to be at the receiving end of the violent attacks on our American allies. At the time of the Libyan strike there was posted through the letter box of virtually every home in the area around Mildenhall, which I have represented for 20 years or so, a leaflet which showed a great arrow arching down from space and exploding across my villages, with the suggestion that something called Reagan-Thatcher had placed the people of Suffolk in the front line and that there would be blood in the streets. That was the legend.

The Americans have been vilified and attacked, not least by the BBC in programmes such as "Airbase". There have been total and monstrous attacks on the young American service men who work in Britain. It has never been easy to maintain the American presence here, but I know that it has helped us to negotiate together the first step towards nuclear disarmmament.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

I hope that we shall continue with the double-track policy that has served us so well. It is vital—this will not be easy to maintain—to keep the Americans committed here in the United Kingdom. With the low dollar and pressures on Congress and the American Administration generally to reduce their forces overseas, there will be voices urging American service men to go home.

I hope, too, that the NATO Alliance will stay solid. There can be no doubt that a measure of nervousness is creeping into the Federal Republic of Germany. If we are to achieve peace, it is essential that the NATO Alliance remains united, strong and resolute. It is because that has been achieved so far that we have the treaty before us and will be having Soviet inspectors on our soil. The second achievement is dramatic and is the pay-off for the sensible policies that have followed by the Conservative Government. They have been followed by some Opposition Members, and it is only unfortunate that far too many of them have sought to abandon them.

11.7 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* I think that proportionately there are as many of us in the Chamber as there are representatives of any other party —I join the welcome that has been given to the order. The momentous treaty which was agreed in December 1987 —the INF agreement—was achieved in spite of the policies of the Government rather than because of them.

The treaty is the first to eliminate a class of nuclear weapons, and that is of enormous significance. Secondly, it represents a considerable breakthrough in terms of verification. As the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) illustrated, Soviet service personnel will be coming to Britain to inspect American bases and to ascertain the number of missiles that are to be found within them. In years to come, the purpose of the procedure will be to seek the elimination of these weapons. This is an important breakthrough, and I hope that it can be added to and built upon when we come to deal with other areas of weaponry where verification procedures are important in securing agreements.

When we are intent on eliminating a class of nuclear weapons, the process of verification is that much easier. It is comparatively easy to spot whether someone is cheating if only one missile is discovered after a date when all such weapons are supposed to have been eliminated. If, as we hope, we arrive at an agreement to reduce strategic nuclear weapons—it is clear that not all categories of them will be reduced—there will be many problems in estimating numbers of warheads per missile. However, we hope that the breakthrough on verification that is represented by the INF treaty will provide a worthwhile starting point.

It is my understanding that warheads are not to be destroyed under the treaty, which seeks to eliminate missiles. Can the Minister confirm that the fissile materials in the warheads will not remain in the United Kingdom but will, along with the missiles, be taken back to the United States?

Will United Kingdom officials accompany Soviet and United States officials when the inspections take place at Molesworth and Greenham Common? Can the Minister confirm that the order brings into being with regard to the inspection teams the normal rules of diplomatic privileges and immunity? That should also mean that we will have power to object to, and indeed expel, any inspectors if there is good reason for doing so.

Two other points have already been touched on, principally by Opposition Members. First, it will be regrettable if what has been heralded as a major breakthrough in disarmament turns out to be the catalyst which leads to a new generation of more sophisticated nuclear weapons. If we have nuclear weapons—nuclear deterrence is accepted by my party—there is a need to ensure that we do not have disarmament by obsolescence, but that we update existing weaponry. But there is a fundamental difference between that and, under the guise of modernisation, entering on a new generation of nuclear weapons which, to all intents and purposes, undermine the whole basis of the INF treaty.

The second point is slightly off the straight and narrow, but perhaps the Minister will say a few words about it. I know that the Government give a high priority to trying to achieve agreement on the production and deployment of chemical weapons. Important verification problems are involved. The Americans asked for mandatory inspections and I understand that the Soviet Union has now acceded to that. Yet the problems of trying to conclude a treaty on chemical weapons still exist. Up to now, the Government have made considerable efforts to try to bring about agreement. Is there anything in the procedures agreed under the INF treaty which would be useful in trying to achieve acceptable verification by all sides for chemical weapons?

As we have seen from recent events in the Iran-Iraq war, trying to pursue verification to the point of perfection on chemical weapons should perhaps take second place to trying to stop their proliferation. It is an important issue and I should be glad if the Minister would say something about the current standing of talks.

11.12 pm

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) in paying tribute to Lord Mulley, although on a slightly different point from the one he mentioned. It was Lord Mulley, when he was Secretary of State for Defence in 1979, who started the process of introducing cruise missiles into this country, leading to the twin-track policy, which has led to the document which we are now considering. It is strange that the Labour party has been so reluctant to take the credit which is due to Lord Mulley and, therefore, to the party for this result.

What would have been the effect of the Labour party policy of one-sided nuclear disarmament if it had been adopted? We would not have this document before us tonight because we would not have achieved it. NATO would have been thrown into disarray. The Soviet Union would have stood back and watched, chuckling, the process of NATO destroying its own capability. For 10 years or more I have repeatedly, in debate, asked people who support the one-sided disarmament policy what country they think would have followed Britain's disarmament policy if it had been so foolish as to disarm in a one-sided manner. I have never had an answer.

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps I might say to my right hon. Friend, whose speech I am greatly enjoying, that we have before us the example of chemical weapons referred to by

the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). We laid down chemical weapons 30 years ago, but the Soviet Union has used the intervening 30 years to build up massively its capability.

Sir Peter Blaker: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point that I have frequently made.

One has only to ask oneself whether the Soviet Union would have followed our example to know the answer. Indeed, Mr. Andropov, when he was General Secretary in the Soviet Union, said that the Soviets did not believe in one-sided disarmament.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Sir Peter Blaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. Other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Andropov said that the Soviets did not believe in one-sided nuclear disarmament. They were not naive people. One has only to ask whether China, France or the United States would have followed our example to know that the question answers itself.

This document is the result of NATO standing firm and that has led to the process of negotiation. Negotiation is precisely the opposite of the process advocated by the Labour party in recent years.

Negotiations have centred on two points, the first of which is reciprocal and balanced reductions. As I have been explaining, it is ridiculous to imagine that by one-sided nuclear disarmament we can obtain balanced and reciprocal reductions. One cannot achieve from one-sided disarmament an agreed measure of disarmament. It defies logic to suggest such a result.

Secondly, this document is about the process of verification. As the West has insisted for many years, verification is at the heart of arms control or arms reduction. Both the reciprocal reductions and the verification can be obtained only by a process of negotiation. Both Mr. Andropov's statement and the reality of the process which has led to the formulation of this document make nonsense of Labour party policy.

11.16 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I shall try to make my comments brief, although some things need to be said.

There is no doubt that the Labour party welcomes both the INF agreement and this order as part of that agreement, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, it is a tragedy that we are not discussing more this evening and that we have not progressed further down the path of negotiation. Opportunities are being lost and it appears that the Government, as a result of the Montebello agreement, are taking action that circumvents the INF agreement and puts the agreement on arms reduction at risk.

Hon. Members are aware that, through defence questions over the past few months, I have sought to obtain clarification from the Minister on exactly what is happening with the upgrading. I am told that it is a modernisation programme. It is not a question of being churlish, or not giving credit where credit is due, or putting the blame at people's door, unless it deserves to be there. It is a question of discussing in a mature and responsible way an agreement vital for our future and for our children's future.

The Minister referred to our "full obligations" in complying with the treaty and to access for verification. Our full obligations are those of continuing negotiation, to put meaning into the agreement, to fulfil the requirements of that agreement, and to use it to progress arms reduction.

As we have been told, the term "modernisation" has suddenly taken on numerous different meanings. Modernisation implies replacement or upgrading of new systems that are broadly similar to our present systems. However, that is not true of the systems agreed at Montebello which we are told will be deployed. They are a new class of nuclear weapons which offer great challenges and undermine the INF agreement. We are talking about the air-launched and the sea-launched cruise missiles and the new Lance missiles.

When we have a modernisation programme with the potential to circumvent an important treaty, we should think carefully about it in developing our commitment to arms reduction. It is clear that the new deployments will boost NATO's nuclear capabilities. That is not in doubt. Many descriptions of the new types of missiles which are being developed demonstrate that point clearly.

An advertisement in the *Washington Post* for the McDonnell-Douglas aircraft was headed:

"In 1982, America started building a framework for INF. It's rolling off the assembly line now."

The advertisement continued:

"Just as some of our missiles in Europe are being marked for dismantling, the first new F-15E Eagles are being built.

The timing is perfect. Independent defense experts say the fit with America's post-INF strategy is perfect. And yet procurement of this valuable deterrent has been reduced."

The advertisement went on to explain how this aircraft could be used to keep the same capabilities in a climate of supposed nuclear reduction.

There is great strength of feeling in the House and in Britain generally about negotiations for arms reductions, of which the order is a part. A Gallup poll commissioned by an organisation not well favoured by the Government —the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament—was carried out between 14 and 19 April. It showed that 65 per cent. of those polled opposed NATO's plans to modernise nuclear weapons.

So that Conservative Members can be assured that the questions are not loaded to give the response that we would like, I shall read them. First, the poll asked:

"The United States has agreed to remove nuclear cruise missiles from Greenham Common as part of an agreement with the Soviet Union. Do you approve or disapprove of replacing them with new sea or air launched cruise missiles based in Britain?"

That provision was part of the Montebello agreement. Thirty-three per cent. approved and 51 per cent. disapproved. Secondly, the poll asked:

"The United States and the Soviet Union have just agreed to remove 1,000 nuclear warheads from Europe. Do you think that NATO should modernise its nuclear weapons that are left, or should they start negotiations for further reductions in their numbers?"

Sixty-five per cent. wanted further reductions through negotiation, not escalation.

Although we welcome the order's possibilities, it does not fulfil, as the Minister said it would, our obligations to attempt through modernisation to circumvent the agreement which we unanimously welcome. We ask the Government to reconsider their position, especially on modernisation, and to give true meaning to all our responses on nuclear weapons and ensure that future

[Ms. Dawn Primarolo]

negotiations on reductions add to the INF agreement. We ask the Government to do this quickly, as we all seem to agree on this strategy.

11.24 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I begin with one pedantic question. It refers to paragraph 4 of the annex, which I mentioned during the Minister's speech. If quarantine regulations are to be enforced and prohibited goods looked for, presumably some powers of search are needed. If we are not careful, things could develop sourly into some sort of fiasco. Those who welcome the agreement would find that regrettable. So what is the position in relation to search?

Like many of my age group, I was in the Army of the Rhine from 1950 to 1952. The House will forgive me if I say that this is a moving moment. That was the time of the Korean war, and there were two or three days when many of us thought that we could easily be frizzled in tanks. It was an ugly period, and only those who have been through such a experience can understand how welcome tonight is, and what a dramatic change it represents.

I agree with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths): 30 years ago no one would have thought that this would happen. It would have been a pipedream for the service men of that generation and for those who entered the House at the time of the spine-chilling Cuban missile crisis. This is no more than a start, but it is a significant start.

I was grateful for the tributes paid by Conservative Members to Fred Mulley, who was a much underrated Secretary of State for Defence and member of the national executive committee of the Labour party.

As for chemical weapons, I refer the Minister to the report by David Fairhall in *The Guardian* of 25 April, and ask two questions about it. Fairhall says:

"The Ministry of Defence is expected to announce the visit within the next 10 days".

That is the visit of the Soviet delegation concerned with chemical weapons. Is that so? Can the Minister say anything about the British visit to Shikhani on the Volga, described by Fairhall as the centre for Russian chemical weapons?

I promised my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that I would share the time with him, so I end with this question: given this sort of negotiation with the Russians, is there not some advantage in the Government pursuing their scientific problems with them? Those in the Kremlin must have at the forefront of their minds the general problem of the Aral sea and what to do about the Siberian rivers. If we are to be positive, should we not tell the Russians that we recognise their problem, which involves feeding the burgeoning population of Uzbekistan and a possible ecological catastrophe? We should ask what help we can give. I am glad that a Foreign Office Minister is to answer the debate. I should like to know, by letter if not tonight, what attitude we are adopting to this major problem of the Russians.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is right: this is the second treaty; the Antarctic treaty was the first. With the ever-increasing number of scientific reports on the ozone layer above the Arctic as well as the Antarctic, should not there be co-operation on that problem, too?

11.29 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am glad that hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that, 10 years ago, nobody would have thought such an order possible. We have a fully verifiable treaty involving inspection teams to ensure that missiles are being destroyed.

It worries me a little to hear the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) mentioning two questions in a poll sponsored by CND. I would have liked those questions to start not only with a rider about our dismantling missiles, but with a reference to the fact that the Soviet Union is modernising all its nuclear and conventional weapons.

There has been much comment about one weapon system. I should like to make one simple and obvious point that has been made often, but which seems to be lost sight of, especially on the Labour side of the Chamber. It is that, as long as the Soviet Union has overwhelming conventional superiority, the West cannot afford not to have up-to-date tactical nuclear weapons.

11.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I warmly welcome the order and the treaty. The order shows that the treaty has happened and that something will be achieved. I find it rather strange that Tory Members are desperately searching for proof that the Government had something to do with the treaty. Having condemned all Soviet peace proposals for the past five years, they now favour everything in the treaty.

As far as I can see, the only practical contribution made by the British Government was the provision of Chablis and salmon for Mr. Gorbachev when he came to Brize Norton and the eternal saving of the village school because it was visited by Mrs. Raisa Gorbachev.

The Government's actions since the treaty was agreed have been the very antithesis of a welcome for it. The Prime Minister has said that she pressed the NATO Council of Ministers to agree an upgrading and modernisation of nuclear and non-nuclear weapons. She agreed a further arms race in Europe and the stockpiling of weapons outside INF, thus putting another treaty further away.

We are entitled to ask the Government what practical steps they are taking to ensure that a further treaty, which includes sea and air-launched missiles, is made. It is important to note that the diplomatic immunity that is being granted is necessary only because we have US bases here. Inspection is necessary because, apparently, there is so little British Government control over them. We are entitled to know what steps the Minister is taking to ensure that there can be British inspection of what goes on in American bases.

Earlier today, we were told that there are only 66 United States bases here. That figure is hotly contested. A CND publication shows that there are 157 United States installations and more than 30,000 service men. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, those service men enjoy diplomatic immunity through the Visiting Forces Act 1952. We are entitled to know what control there is over such bases and what goes on in them.

We live in a world where 133 countries have renounced the use of nuclear weapons and do not feel it necessary to

have them. We live in a world where a large number of countries feel able to cut arms expenditure. Indeed, some do not even have standing armies. Yet apparently we need to spend £19 billion on defence when there is no perceivable enemy. We find it necessary to spend vast sums of money on nuclear weapons outside the terms of the INF treaty and we have a Government who are busy promoting the nuclear and conventional arms race.

I find it obscene, wrong and vile that in a world racked with hunger, poverty and division between industrial and non-industrial countries, we should have a Government obsessed with spending so many resources on a weapons system and on armaments that can lead only to further imbalances in the world, which cannot bring peace, but can bring the likelihood of war nearer.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Corbyn: No. I am about to finish.

I hope that the Minister will tell us what plans he has for a further stage of nuclear disarmament talks, for the removal of nuclear weapons from this country, and above all to promote worldwide nuclear disarmament which is desperately needed.

11.35 pm

Mr. Mellor: By leave of the House, I should like to reply to some of the points raised in the debate, which once again has shown the extraordinary degree to which the Labour party is unable to command any confidence whatsoever on the issue of defence. Labour Members seem incapable of learning anything from their crushing defeats in the last two general elections which, as much as anything, were about the inadequacies of their defence policy.

The objectionable thing that stood out in all the speeches of Labour Members, except that of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), is their willingness to be sceptical about the Government of the United Kingdom and to be sceptical almost to the point of paranoia about the United States Government, and their toe-licking subservience to every argument that falls from the lips of Mr. Gorbachev. I read in my telegrams from Moscow what Mr. Gorbachev is saying and then, lo and behold, a couple of weeks later it is parroted back from the Opposition Benches.

I shall deal with some of the serious contributions to the debate and answer some of the questions. Then, in the time that is left, I shall deal with the points made from the Labour Front Bench.

Once again I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) and his constituents on their forbearance in the national interest in standing firm at Greenham Common against all the efforts of those on the Left to disrupt any possibility of getting a genuinely consensual agreement with the Soviets instead of giving the Soviets what they wanted without them having to bargain away a single missile.

The USSR, in its exchange of notes, undertakes to comply strictly with the inspection protocol. It must remove immediately any inspector objected to by the United States or ourselves. It has no right to bring in anything prohibited by the quarantine regulations in paragraph 4.

I would say to the hon. Member for Linlithgow that there is no power of search. The inspectors are inviolable, as are diplomats, because the order, in effect, gives them temporary diplomatic status. *[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) repeats from a sedentary position the question about the Visiting Forces Act 1952 that was raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who, with the charm that we have all come to love, gives his opinion to the House and then leaves before the Minister has a chance to reply.

The Visiting Forces Act removes from United Kingdom jurisdiction only service men who are subject to the jurisdiction of their own national authorities and those who have diplomatic immunity. The inspectors will have diplomatic immunity and, in effect, will be diplomats.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked me three questions. The answer to each of them is yes.

The hon. Member for Hamilton said that he was speaking about the disarray within NATO. He was really paying tribute to the disarray within the Labour party. The hoops through which even some of the more moderate Labour Members are expected to jump to maintain their positions on this issue are quite extraordinary. It appears that the brave attempts of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who leads for the Opposition on foreign affairs, to rewrite Labour's defence policy have failed—hence the fact that the hon. Member for Hamilton has been standing on his head, like a younger version of Father William but not being particularly convincing about it.

The hon. Gentleman began by referring to the south of England as "temporarily Tory". That would have provoked hilarity in a normal speech, but it was about the most sensible thing that he said because it was the least removed from reality. He referred to the present disarray within NATO, but NATO has never been better able to cope with the strains and pressures of the future than it is at the moment.

In November 1986, the Prime Minister met President Reagan and the next four stages of the Western strategy were agreed: INF, START, conventional talks, chemical talks. That was followed by the Reykjavik NATO Council at which that strategy was endorsed as NATO policy. The first leg of that endorsement has been satisfactorily concluded with the signing of the INF treaty. The START treaty is under way and talks are in progress to establish a conventional stability mandate. All that was further ratified and endorsed by a highly successful and unanimous NATO summit two months ago. If that is a definition of disarray, it is the kind of disarray in which the Labour party, because of its problems, would like to find itself.

Although the hon. Member for Hamilton attends conferences and has studied this matter for a number of years, he still seems to be astonishingly wayward with the facts. He claims that the German politicians to whom he referred are in favour of a triple zero. That does not begin to be the case. The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that the Federal Republic of Germany subscribed to the agreement, as did all the other NATO members, at the North Atlantic Council meeting in June 1987, which referred to it being

"in conjunction with the establishment of a conventional balance and the global elimination of chemical weapons,

[Mr. Mellor]

tangible and verifiable reductions of American and Soviet land-based missiles, nuclear missile systems of shorter range, leading to equal ceilings."

It is understood throughout the NATO Alliance that the question of shorter-range missiles will be determined at the end of the process for reducing the conventional imbalance that heavily favours the Soviet Union.

That is the problem with which Opposition Members completely fail to come to terms. They refer to circumvention of the INF agreement, but that is legal nonsense, because that which is treaty-limited is treaty-limited, and that which is not treaty-limited is not treaty-limited and cannot be treated as such by the use of slack words such as "circumvention".

What about the Soviet increases? When do the Opposition condemn those increases? There will be complete modernisation of all their ground-based strategic missile forces in the next 10 years. During the 10 years in which Montebello led to a reduction in NATO's nuclear forces from 7,000 warheads to 4,600, the Soviets built up their missile systems. The number of Fencer nuclear-capable attack aircraft has been increased from 240 to 1,000. Even in the era of glasnost——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (Inspections) (Privileges and Immunities) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 28th March, be approved.

Hazardous Waste Disposal (Greater Manchester)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a matter of considerable concern to the Greater Manchester area. What prompted me to apply for the debate was anxiety at increased imports of hazardous waste into the United Kingdom and into the Greater Manchester area in particular. Concern has been expressed by the general public, by the media and by the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority, which has taken the trouble to write to 30 Members of Parliament expressing its anxiety.

Also of concern is the air of mystery and mystique that surrounds so many aspects of the disposal of the materials, where they originate, what is in the sealed containers, the routes designated for transporting hazardous waste, and the lack of communication with the local authority and the general public. A report and correspondence from the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority points out emphatically the difficulties of policing the increasing levels of hazardous waste coming from Europe. Imports of material into the Greater Manchester area have increased from 5,000 tonnes in 1981 to at least 170,000 tonnes in 1986. Some estimates suggest an even higher figure.

What is the reason for that increase? The Greater Manchester authority explains the reason and draws attention to the restrictive practices of other European countries and local authorities towards hazardous waste disposal within their own boundaries. It draws attention also to the use of an international brokerage system which allocates the movement of waste. It is also the job of the brokers to identify countries willing to import hazardous waste material. The United Kingdom falls into that category. In other words, other European countries are refusing to import such waste and are using brokers to dump the material in other people's backyards.

The trend towards more imports and fewer exports is placing great stress on the United Kingdom's internal system for waste control. At present, the system can cope with home-produced waste, but it is grossly inadequate in respect of imported material. The system is also vulnerable to abuse because of the complexity of commercial arrangements for handling waste produced on the continent. There is also growing worry that fringe operators, or cowboys, who are not always known to the waste disposal authority and whose equipment and practices leave much to be desired, are undertaking hazardous waste disposal.

That leads me to the air of mystique and mystery that shrouds all waste disposal. The report of the chief officer of the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority refers to the transport of hazardous or scheduled waste throughout the area and advises that only the originating production point and the receiving waste disposal authority are provided with any information. No details of movements are given to authorities through whose areas the material passes. The chief officer states that such information would be relatively simple to provide, but he recognises that it would place a great volume of extra work

on their resources. It is not really the information that is required; the real answer is control of that extra traffic of waste material which is now prevalent.

It can also be appreciated that a large volume of potentially hazardous material, such as industrial materials, petroleum products and so on, is transported by our road and rail network, and that fairly stringent controls are in being. We also know, however, that there can be no guarantee of absolute safety. At least in the event of accidents, the material that I have mentioned can be identified by the emergency services. The fire brigade can use the correct equipment, and apply the necessary means to deal with the problem. However, with waste coming from abroad, there appears to be little knowledge of how much and what type of material is being transported. It prompts the question: how would emergency services know just what they were dealing with if there was a serious accident? They could be dealing with an unknown substance.

My information is that, after arriving in the United Kingdom, the waste falls within the scope of the special waste regulations, under which it is deemed that the waste is produced at the point of entry, normally by an importing agent. Whereas the home-produced waste can be checked fairly easily, the imported waste handler has to rely on information that may not be accurate, and may have been dealt with by any number of agencies. In other words, the handler does not know what is inside the containers. The waste disposal authority can object if it wishes. However, the chief officer of Greater Manchester authority points out the flaw in the procedure.

First, the hazardous waste is shipped in sealed containers. There is considerable risk in opening the containers. In practice, they are sealed at the point of production abroad, and not opened until they reach the intended site in Greater Manchester. Only at that point can any discrepancy be detected. The chief officer's report tells us:

"It is not until that stage has been reached that there is any possibility of detecting any mis-description, whether wilful or not, of the material. It is at this stage that problems can start to arise. First, if the receiving WDA has not received its copy of the consignment note (this is a fairly common occurrence) it is unaware of the situation and cannot, therefore, take any preventative action. Secondly, it is possible that the site operator will not check the composition of the waste actually received against the information given on his copy of the consignment note and improper and perhaps even dangerous disposal of the material can follow. Thirdly, if the material is actually examined (and this does happen in the majority of cases, although there is no strict legal requirement to do so), and found not to conform with its description, or not to be a type for which the disposal site is licensed, then the site operator has considerable problems. The obvious course of action would be to return the material to its producer but, it is reported, there seem to be considerable difficulties in doing this and the United Kingdom waste disposal operator is therefore under considerable commercial and financial pressure to resort to some improper and inappropriate form of disposal. It is not suggested that improper disposal, arising from the reasons briefly described above, has assumed serious proportions but, from a number of reported cases, there is cause for serious concern and, because of the expanding nature of this traffic and its very considerable financial implications it is unlikely that the position will improve in the near future."

The chief officer does not assume that improper disposal has reached serious proportions. However, the worrying thing is that he does warn that there is cause for serious concern. All this waste, including aqueous acids, alkalis, inorganic and organic materials and asbestos, is processed by three privately owned firms in Greater Manchester before its final disposal.

The Government's policy to discourage imports of hazardous waste into Britain to be used for such things as landfilling may be welcome, but it has not been supported so far by legislation. It is difficult to estimate what effect the Government's policies have had. However, taking into consideration the ever-increasing quantities that are now arriving on our shores, it would appear to be very little indeed. It is getting to serious proportions, and that is why the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority is calling for urgent action to tackle the problem of imported waste into the county.

It would appear that the Government have taken a rather neutral attitude and have even been complacent about what is happening. The Government must be made aware that their judgment is now being questioned. Their opinions on the matter are being regarded with concern by the public. The Government should start addressing the seriousness of the situation, realise the extent of today's traffic in hazardous waste and cease to have a blinkered approach.

The Government must realise that safety controls and the notification procedure need tightening up. The Government must also address themselves to the proper licensing of waste hauliers and bring in the necessary legislation.

The February edition of "ENDS" says:

"There is a growing gap between public and ministerial opinion on this matter which should be the subject of general concern. Ministers continue to use the same language as they did a few years ago when waste imports into Britain were tiny by comparison with today's traffic: no objection could possibly be raised, they insist, to the 'legitimate' trade in waste."

Meanwhile, the public are naturally becoming sensitive to suggestions that Britain is becoming a dumping ground for other people's filth. Industrialists, who rely on landfills, are relatively cheap disposal outlets, and disposal contractors who make a living from them should be taking note, because it might take only an incident or a consignment or two to disrupt those established relationships.

The Government should recognise above all that we are rapidly becoming a dumping ground for other people's filth, and urgent action is now called for.

Doing little or nothing could have far-reaching consequences for future generations. We have witnessed complacency relating to hazardous material and the effects on the health of people who have become contaminated. It is for the future that I urge the Government to take action now.

11.58 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister and to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), for giving me the opportunity to intervene to ask the Minister whether he is aware that I have urged the Secretary of State for the Environment to close down the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority's tip at Hypatia street in my constituency which I visited on Friday and which I can only describe as a stinking volcano threatening the health and well-being of the neighbouring residents.

11.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I begin by responding to the specific point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). I have asked my officials to look into the issue of the Hypatia street quarry tip as a matter of urgency and to report back to me by the end of the week.

I appreciate the concern that my hon. Friend has expressed on behalf of his constituents, particularly Mrs. Hardman and Mrs. Williams, and the 350 signatories to the petition that was brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I shall be in touch with my hon. Friend on that specific point in writing by Monday evening of next week at the latest.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) for drawing the attention of the House to the general question of the need for improvements to the system for dealing with imports of hazardous waste into the United Kingdom. From the general, the hon. Gentleman moved to the specific and to his serious concern about the problems of hazardous waste being brought into Greater Manchester.

I appreciate the conviction that lies behind the hon. Gentleman's wish to see the introduction of tougher controls and his wish to see the concerns and fears of his constituents allayed—a view which receives a sympathetic response from the Government, who are reviewing methods of improving controls, for example, by extending the specific waste regulations to cover all pollution risks, thus bringing a much wider range of wastes within the documentary pre-notification requirements, improving the consignment note procedure, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and introducing a statutory code of practice to place greater responsibilities on the producers of waste to ensure its safe disposal. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that we are examining the possibility of registering waste carriers and extending the powers of licensing authorities.

Those issues pose complex problems requiring appropriate solutions in the near future, but I accept that it is no longer satisfactory simply to answer hon. Members' worries by pointing to the long history of waste control as opposed to the rash of short-term reactive measures which have characterised the response of some of our trading partners to their domestic disposal practices.

However high the standards we rightly boast for our treatment and disposal operators, we cannot shirk understandable public anxiety which has led to calls for tougher controls over what is already an effective, well-managed and highly proficient domestic industry.

Before dealing with the specific problems referred to by the hon. Gentleman about hazardous waste disposal in the Greater Manchester area, I want to set the debate in context. All imported wastes are subject to precisely the same controls as wastes generated within the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has the right facilities and capacity to handle hazardous wastes and is geologically better suited to safer disposal than many of our European colleagues.

The maxim that waste is better safely disposed of here than dangerously elsewhere remains valid in many cases. As with the release of CFCs and halons into the atmosphere, the central point is not whence these ozone-depleting chemicals come; their effect on the ozone layer is equally significant. In one respect the same applies to waste. There is only one environment and it is better that disposal and treatment should take place where the highest standards required are practised.

However, the debate should not conclude on that point. While we can rightly argue that imports are, once within the United Kingdom, subject to the same controls as United Kingdom-generated waste, it is the Government's view that if the United Kingdom can safely landfill the material, there is a corresponding duty on exporting countries wherever possible to develop an expertise to do the same.

We recognise that there exists increased environmental awareness. Public opinion throughout the western world is more conscious of the risks and environmental hazards that can arise if waste is not dealt with properly. In a number of countries there are legacies of thousands of sites where wastes have been dumped in an uncontrolled manner for many years, causing major pollution problems.

Only since the early 1970s have countries such as the United States, Denmark, Netherlands, West Germany and France begun to regulate and control landfill. The United States has a super fund of $8·5 billion to clean up old sites, and in the Netherlands and Denmark large sums have also been earmarked for that purpose. The result has been widespread public reaction in those countries against waste disposal in general, and landfill for hazardous wastes in particular, even though in practical terms there is very little alternative for the vast majority of these wastes. Governments have responded by denouncing landfill and many have constructed high-tech incinerators, which of course still require landfill for disposal of ash.

Placed in context, the United Kingdom imports some 53,000 tonnes per annum of special wastes, compared to about 3 million tonnes per annum in international trade within Europe. In total, waste imports comprise about 0·5 per cent. of the total waste disposal in the United Kingdom. Disposal facilities for special wastes in the Greater Manchester area comprise three private sector chemical and physical treatment plants whose purpose is to detoxify special wastes so that the resultant treatment residues may be safely landfilled.

Currently there is not a landfill site within the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority area that is licensed to take special wastes. In 1986, 155,000 tonnes of special waste were treated in the Greater Manchester area, including 12,000 tonnes that were brought from Europe. Of the 78,000 tonnes of special waste that was generated in the Greater Manchester area, 46,000 tonnes were disposed of elsewhere in Britain.

These treatment and disposal facilities are regulated by the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority. The facilities are licensed and pre-notification requirements of the special waste regulations apply to all movement of special wastes.

I can well understand the concern of those living in the area at the suggestion that their locality and area should be a focus for the disposal of special waste that comes from elsewhere in the United Kingdom, let alone from overseas. Waste disposal is rarely regarded as an attractive neighbour, particularly when special wastes are involved.

However, two points have to be borne in mind. First, waste disposal is a necessary industry. The many products that modern technology demand and that we demand as consumers unfortunately produce difficult wastes as a

by-product. We have to recognise that the disposal of these wastes is part of the price that we have to pay for our high standard of living.

Secondly, it follows that we must have increasingly sophisticated methods and techniques for dealing with these wastes. This means that we must have, among other things, chemical and physical treatment plants that can detoxify wastes so that they can be disposed of without risk to the environment. It would be unrealistic and a misuse of resources to expect every area and locality to provide such sophisticated facilities. It makes economic and environmental sense to make full use of the three facilities that are available in the Greater Manchester area.

I can understand, indeed I sympathise with, those who ask, "But why in my backyard?" The most that any Government can do is to ensure that the necessary treatment and disposal processes, wherever they are carried out, are done safely with a minimum effect on the local population and without risk to the environment.

Towards that objective, the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority has recently taken steps, in co-operation with the three private sector companies involved, to improve control over imported waste by modifying the licences so that all imports of waste, whether special or not, are notified to the authority. Movement of waste to other countries for disposal is a well established phenomenon in western Europe. Figures are not collected on a regular basis, but as long ago as 1983 the OECD estimated that 2·2 million tonnes was traded in Europe, and in that year only 5,000 tonnes came to the United Kingdom.

We believe that trade has increased substantially worldwide since then, but the United Kingdom continues to accept rather less than many of our neighbours, and certainly less than might be expected for our relative size. Waste can move between countries to benefit from the use of specialised disposal facilities. All the special waste that is accepted by firms in the United Kingdom falls into this category. Three of these specialised facilities are those alluded to in this debate and are in the Greater Manchester area.

I am informed by the Greater Manchester waste disposal authority that these three firms took 24,000 tonnes of imported waste last year, in comparison with the capacity of more than 150,000 tonnes per annum. I do not believe, therefore, that the additional amount of imported waste places a strain on these facilities, or in any way endangers the availability of capacity for United Kingdom waste arisings.

Nevertheless, I am aware of the concern caused by waste imports. Therefore I am pleased to have this opportunity to emphasise firmly that the United Kingdom's disposal methods bear comparison with those of any other country. Our system of control—licensing of the facilities and extra attention to the movement of special waste—is similar to the systems employed in most industrialised countries.

All industrialised countries landfill special waste, but where we differ from some countries is that we do not entomb special waste, storing the problems of disposal for future generations, that is, rightly, of great concern to the hon. Gentleman and the House. A significant proportion of our special wastes are treated at facilities such as those in Manchester. A greater proportion are landfilled together with putrescible wastes, so that natural biological processes work on the waste to make it safe. This is a method of disposal preferable to entombment, not inferior, which in no way warrants any description of the United Kingdom as anyone's dustbin.

The Government have recognised the importance of responding to the lack of information about trans-frontier shipment of waste. For that reason we were instrumental in promoting the implementation of the EC trans-frontier directive. We are committed to it because it will provide waste handlers and regulatory authorities with more opportunities to obtain the detailed information on process origin and the nature of the waste proposed for import since they will be in receipt of 28 days' notification of intent to import specific waste for disposal.

That will go a long way towards overcoming the present doubts about the lack of information about imported special waste. I accept that several aspects of that are not specifically covered in the directive, however welcome and important a step in the right direction it is. For that reason, I emphasise the importance that we attach to considering other points raised and additional points which I highlighted as priorities at the beginning of my speech.

The Department's hazardous waste inspectorate has drawn attention to the scope for improvement in waste disposal licensing, monitoring and enforcement. the measures I have outlined are designed to redress these deficiencies. In addition, the Department is preparing a radical revision of the waste management paper concerned with disposal site licensing: this is intended for publication this summer, and will provide Greater Manchester waste disposal authority with clear and unequivocal guidance on the licensing of facilities handling all controlled wastes, including those imported for disposal.

I strongly reject any argument that the Government are in any way complacent. I am confident that at present volumes, imports of waste for disposal in the United Kingdom do not compromise the capacity available for waste generated by United Kingdom industry. Neither do I believe that they offer any technical or environmental problem different from that presented by the United Kingdom waste. Our system of control by disposal site licensing ensures that only wastes suited to a particular disposal regime can be accepted. We are not complacent, and I am keeping closely in touch with this issue, and pursuing the programme of action which I have outlined. I shall be considering whether any further controls are necessary.

I hope that having had this opportunity to place on record those points, I can keep all hon. Members closely in touch with developments as we make progress on the specific issue of how best we can move forward with more effective controls, should the Government feel that these are necessary.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 April 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SCOTTISH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (OBAN SOUTH PIER) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme

1. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the funding for Crossroads care attendant schemes in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I have received 25 letters about the funding of local Crossroads schemes in the past 10 months.

Mrs. Michie: Does the Minister agree that the ending of the community programme will have a tremendously adverse effect on the excellent Crossroads scheme, which helps to give respite to the carers of over 4,000 disabled, multiple handicapped, sick people? Does he also agree that those people, who willingly and lovingly look after often confused and difficult relatives, desperately need time off just to do the ordinary things of life and that the Crossroads scheme enables them to do that? Will he tell us whether funding for the Crossroads scheme will continue and under what heading it might come—for example, the social work services group in Edinburgh?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with everything that the hon. Lady said about the excellent work done by Crossroads schemes throughout Scotland. There are 42 operating in Scotland, of which 28 receive support from the Manpower Services Commission. There is no reason why funding should be withdrawn as a result of the changes in the employment training programme. Crossroads will be invited to apply to take part in the employment training programme, as will other voluntary bodies participating in the community programme.

The new programme will certainly place greater emphasis on training, but that need not necessarily mean that funding is no longer available. It is also open to local Crossroads schemes to apply to their local authorities and health boards for support.

Mr. Ingram: Is the Minister aware that the Under-Secretary of State for Employment wrote to me on 28 March saying that the idea of a rate for the job will no longer be relevant to those employed on the scheme? Is he further aware that that is one of the main worries of those who are currently running the schemes and that, in East Kilbride, 300 beneficiaries of the scheme are likely to lose out if it does not continue?

Will the Minister provide the resources to the Lanarkshire health board to enable the scheme to continue? I should like to draw his attention to the fact that one third of the referrals to the scheme in East Kilbride come from the Lanarkshire health board, with no funding being provided by it.

Mr. Forsyth: The purpose of the scheme is to support carers and to help those in need of support. The question of the rate for the job does not arise. The training allowance is a more appropriate form of remuneration for a training programme. The proposed allowance will result in benefit entitlement, plus a premium of £10 to £12 a week. It will therefore be more attractive to unemployed people with families on higher benefit levels than the existing community programme wage limit.

Confinements

2. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current proportion of confinements in *(a)* general practitioner units, and *(b)* specialist consultancy hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest figures are 7·1 and 92·9 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that general practitioner units, including those in rural areas, have a good record and an important part to play? I cannot expect him to comment at this stage, but, in relation to the proposals from Grampian health board about Torphins hospital in my area, will he bear in mind that if such proposals go ahead a large area with a big population, which is not easily accessible to Aberdeen, will be deprived of proper local maternity services?

Mr. Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has made clear his views on the Torphins proposal. Indeed, on 15 April he met my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and members of the Torphins Action Group. I can assure my right hon. Friend that, when the formal submission from Grampian health board goes to my right hon. and learned Friend, we shall take into account all the arguments that he has put forward and, indeed, all the submissions that we receive, before reaching any conclusion.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Are we to take it from his comments that the Minister has not yet received comments from Grampian health board? When does he expect to respond to proposals? What facilities will be offered by the Scottish Office for consultation and negotiation with the many interested parties in Grampian region on the future of maternity units? Does he agree that the centralisation of such facilities would be to the detriment of freedom of choice for mothers in rural communities?

Mr. Forsyth: For a moment I thought that the hon. Lady was going to congratulate Grampian health board on acceeding to a request not to close the unit at Keith in her constituency.

As the hon. Lady knows, consultation is the responsibility of the health board. On her question about a submission from the health board, I can say that we had an initial approach, following the board meeting on 7 April. We have yet to receive formal submissions from the board. Obviously, we shall consider them and reach a conclusion as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the health board should act constructively, sensibly and sympathetically to the problems of the far flung parts of our rural constituencies—the glens? Does he also agree that there are difficulties in getting to specialist units for confinement? Does he accept that the recent pay increase for nurses and others in the Health Service will substantially improve morale and service, and that that can only be good for all hospitals?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend. All health boards have a duty to review the services that they offer to ensure that the best use is made of resources and that the service meets the needs of the widest range of patients. Obviously, that includes taking into account the rural areas. My hon. Friend is quite right to refer to nurses' pay, which under this Government has increased in real terms by 44 per cent.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Not in Scotland.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says, "Not in Scotland." When the Labour party was in power, nurses' pay was cut by 20 per cent. in real terms.

Dr. Reid: Is the Minister aware that many hospitals in Grampian and elsewhere, including Hartwood hospital in my constituency, are going through a tendering process for hospital services? Does he recall the Morrison directive, which stated that when considering tendering, cost should not be the only factor? Will he assure the House that he will not use his powers to insist that any particularly hospital must place a contract with the lowest tenderer, if that may result in a worse quality of services for patients?

Mr. Forsyth: I can help the hon. Gentleman rather more than he asks. I shall send him a copy of the advice that the Department has given to health boards. It makes it quite clear that competitive tendering is not simply about making savings. It is also about ensuring quality of service. We expect that competitive tendering will result in savings and, indeed, improved standards. That has been the experience in England. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take the opportunity to dissociate himself from those in the Labour party and in the trade union movement who fought so hard against competitive tendering, even though it offers many benefits to hospital services.

Strathclyde (Education Facilities)

3. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Strathclyde regional council to discuss education facilities in the region.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I have no plans to meet Strathclyde regional council to discuss education facilities.

Mr. Martin: The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), are on record as saying that they want to save Notre Dame school, Lady and St. Francis school and Paisley grammar school, from closure. The Secretary of State even went to the length of getting the Prime Minister to intervene in the case of Paisley grammar school. Parents want to keep open schools in my constituency, such as Colston, Elm Vale and St. Bede's. Why is the Secretary of State making flesh of some schools in Strathclyde and fell of others?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is under a profound misunderstanding. The new regulations enable an appeal to be made to the Secretary of State where schools that are full, or substantially full, are proposed for closure. If schools in the hon. Gentleman's constituency fall within those categories, they will be subject to appeal. I understand that St. Bede's is a denominational school. If its Catholic hierarchy is opposed to its closure, under existing regulations it would be subject to an appeal to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen copies of extremely offensive letters that parents of pupils at Neilston primary school in my constituency have been receiving from the leader of the council, Commissar Charles Gray? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that yesterday Commissar Gray announced to the *Evening Times* that he would refuse to meet the chairman of the Neilston action group, the local minister? Will my right hon. and learned Friend or my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State agree to meet me, because people in Neilston are outraged that their letters will not be read by the leader of the council and by the implication that, because parents have had the temerity to write to Charles Gray, Neilston will be victimised? Is that not an outrageous way to behave towards parents and ratepayers?

Mr. Rifkind: I should certainly be concerned to hear that the convenor of Strathclyde regional council was not replying courteously to the representations of local people. Strathclyde regional council has often asserted its belief in the desirability of consultation. The Government believe in consultation, and we hope that the Labour party in Strathclyde region also believes in consultation. I am only too happy to meet my hon. Friend when he is making representations on behalf of his constituents.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Will the Secretary of State recognise the problem of falling school rolls in Strathclyde and other regional authorities? Would not his time be better spent on helping education authorities to deal with their problems than on making matters worse by pursuing unwanted ideas, such as school boards, proposals for testing, the curriculum and opting out, which were foisted on him by the Prime Minister and which have made him a figure of derision in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I recognise the legitimate desire of Strathclyde regional council to rationalise excess capacity, but whether that is best achieved by closing popular schools is another matter. On the latter part of the hon.

Gentleman's question, I should have thought that today of all days he might have desisted from such comment. We are all slightly intrigued by the Labour party's latest proposals to allow parents and pupils to write confidentially to their local authority about the quality of schools. It would appear that the Labour party believes that assessment is all very well so long as it is conveyed by parents in confidence to a local authority, but not if it is conveyed in public so that teachers and the local authority can be made aware of the matters involved. The Labour party should stop playing double standards in this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are making slow progress today. I ask for briefer questions and answers.

Policy Reform

4. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if people registering their names and addresses for the purposes of the poll tax will still be required by the registration officers to add further details about their dates of birth.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that this is a scandalous infringement of people's privacy? What guarantees can he give regarding the confidentiality of this peeping-Tom system?

Mr. Lang: There is nothing extraordinary or sinister about registering one's date of birth. It happens to us all soon after birth. Under section 20 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, access is clearly restricted.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that local income tax, as advocated by the Social and Liberal Democratic party, the Scottish National party and a large number of Socialists, would require far more individual detail than is presently required by the community charge register?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That might not require the registration of dates of birth, but it would certainly require reference numbers of another kind, which would be far more complex and detailed.

Sir Russell-Johnston: Is the Minister aware that these poll tax forms provide an opportunity for an appeal against definition as a "responsible person"? Will he avail himself of that opportunity?

Mr. Lang: There is certainly an opportunity for appeal against a definition of "responsible person". It is a new concept which is introduced by this legislation. That seems to be a strange concept to the Labour Benches, which are peopled by irresponsible persons.

Mr. Harris: In agreeing with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) about the amount of information required by a local income tax, does my hon. Friend also agree that the so-called Mates amendment would have involved a great deal of confidential information being made available to local councils?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will know that registration officers in England and Wales will be empowered generally to seek information that they require, which could include dates of birth.

Mr. Dewar: Does the inquiry form that is now being distributed by registration officers amount to designation under the statute as a responsible person? If so, does the right of appeal arise at this stage? Will the Minister address seriously the important question: is it necessary, when it has been specifically rejected by those drafting the English Bill, to have the date of birth included? Is that not the basis for tagging every adult with an algorithm—an obtrusive and threatening further invasion of privacy? Is it not time that Scottish Office Ministers followed the example of many of their Back-Bench colleagues and re-thought their position? Is it not clear that on a free vote, if such were allowed, the poll tax would be dead and buried? Has it not reached the point where public consent has clearly been withheld, and should not the whole offensive, unjust scheme be abandoned?

Mr. Lang: Designation does not begin with the issue of the canvass form. The canvass form is to enable the registration officer to designate a responsible person. The inclusion of dates of birth as a requirement on the registration form was at the request of local authority practitioners in Scotland.

Scottish Special Housing Association (Rents)

5. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the Scottish Special Housing Association's recent rent increases.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): None, Sir.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that SSHA rents are among some of the highest in Scotland? Is he further aware that the recently imposed rent increases are way beyond three times the level of inflation? Is he also aware that in the same number of weeks we have seen horrific cuts in housing benefit? Will he assure us that he will move to stop the SSHA from levying such an appalling burden on its tenants?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The increases are not out of line with the increases for local authorities. SSHA rents increased by 11·1 per cent., compared with 11·6 per cent., which was the average increase for Scottish local authorities, and the rents paid by new towns tenants are higher. It is important that the appropriate mechanism for lowering the effective rents of those on low incomes or the unemployed should be through the revised housing benefit arrangements, which take account of household circumstances. The SSHA expects to spend 10 per cent. more on management and maintenance, which is the reason for the increase.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree with the evidence that a substantial number of people who are at present in council properties would be happy and delighted to transfer to SSHA properties because of its better record on maintenance and repairs?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am convinced that the SSHA is regarded as a model landlord throughout Scotland.

Mr. Steel: Given these rent increases, does the Minister accept that, because of the changes in social security benefits and the relatively modest increase in the pension, large numbers of SSHA tenants will find themselves poorer this year than last year? That is the responsibility, not of the SSHA, but of the Government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have said that for every pound by which the rent of those who are on income support rises, their housing benefit will increase by a similar amount. Further, a housing deficit subsidy is payable to the SSHA. That subsidy was increased to £24·4 million this year. The purpose of the subsidy is to ensure that rents do not rise beyond a certain level.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Following the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), does my hon. Friend agree that it is significant, first, that he has received no representations about these rent increases, and, secondly, that 1,000 local authority tenants in Castlemilk have recently voted to go into the SSHA, despite higher rents, because they would receive higher standards of repair and maintenance?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is significant that I have had no representations. I think it is valuable that the expertise of the SSHA should be involved in urban regeneration projects, and we would like to see more of that.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that those of us who have SSHA tenants in our constituencies recognise that there is a great deal of anxiety about the higher rents and the social security changes? Does he also accept that he would have received representations had the SSHA been an elected rather than an appointed body?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has to say. There is to be a full debate on the social security arrangements and housing benefit later this afternoon, when the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to put forward that point.

Mr. Home Robertson: Are not these unwarranted rent increases a bitter foretaste of what is in store for tenants in Scotland under the Scottish Homes organisation? Will the Minister stop playing cat and mouse with 80,000 SSHA tenants and give them a genuine choice, including the possibility of maintaining fair rents and security of tenure by transferring to local authorities when the SSHA is abolished under the Housing (Scotland) Bill?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad to confirm —because there has been misinformation in certain areas —that SSHA tenants, when they become tenants of Scottish Homes, will retain all their existing rights. They will be secure tenants and their rents will be set according to the present procedure. As the hon. Gentleman asked about the setting of rents, I should point out that the council of management will determine the rents. In advising the SSHA of the annual deficit subsidy, the Scottish Development Department shows a range of possible increases. It is ultimately for the SSHA to determine rent levels which, with the deficit subsidy, will generate the revenue to maintain its stock in good order.

Radiographers

6. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the work of Scotland's radiographers within the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Radiographers play an essential part in a range of diagnostic and therapeutic services.

Mr. Galloway: Scotland's X-ray men and women will clearly see through the hypocritical cant of that answer. The Government have given early retirement opportunities at the age of 55 to physiotherapists and many grades of nurses on the ground that their work is strenuous. Why have they refused to allow radiographers to be considered for early retirement? Is their job not strenuous? Why are radiographers not being given a fair crack of the whip, when they are such an essential and hard-working part of Scotland's Health Service?

Mr. Forsyth: As to the question of cant, I remind the hon. Gentleman that under this Government radiographer's salaries have gone up in real terms by about 40 per cent. Under the Labour Government, which he supported, their salaries decreased in real terms by 21 per cent.

The facility to retire at the age of 55 within the National Health Service is a legacy from before the inception of the National Health Service. It was carried across to protect the rights of those who had an expectation to retire at an earlier age than the accepted norm.

As regards the nature of the job, the National Radiological Protection Board has recently issued advice on exposure limits, and that advice envisages a full working life up to the age of 65.

Mr. Doran: As well as the shortage of radiographers in the Health Service, the Minister will be well aware that there is a shortage of heart treatment facilities in the Aberdeen area. Will he tell the House when he expects to be in a position to make a statement on the review body's findings, with particular reference to the shortage in Aberdeen?

Mr. Forsyth: First, I advise the hon. Gentleman that there is not a shortage of radiographers in the Health Service. Indeed, quite recently there was concern that there might be an over-supply. We have increased the numbers substantially. Secondly, on his question about providing additional facilities for cardiac surgery in the National Health Service, I shall be answering a written question tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) today on that matter.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that on top of the largest ever expenditure on the Health Service, which has been made in the current year, the Government have announced additional expenditure of £1·38 billion including, of course, the welcome pay award for nurses? Does that not show strongly that the Government really do care about health care and that they are determined to have the finest standards in the world?

Mr. Forsyth: Under this Government the Health Service in Scotland will receive rather more than an additional £200 million this year. That brings spending on the National Health Service to record levels—up by some 28 per cent. in real terms. We have the biggest capital

investment programme and our nurses are better paid than ever before. If I may give just one example, the maximum salary for a sister on an acute ward will now be £13,925, which represents an increase of 16 per cent., as a result of the pay review award. That represents an increase in pay for sisters who have responsibilities on acute wards of 55 per cent. in real terms or of £4,945 since 1979, so we do not want any lectures from Opposition Members, who presided over cuts in nurses' pay.

Newbattle Abbey College

7. **Mr Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further discussions he has had in relation to the future of Newbattle Abbey college.

Mr. Rifkind: On 10 February I met the hon. Gentleman with some of his colleagues to discuss the future of Newbattle Abbey college, and my officials met representatives of the board of governors on 25 January.

Mr. Eadie: While thanking the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his answer, as he is supposed to be a friend of Newbattle Abbey adult residential college, may I ask him to explain the special factors about Scottish education which mean that Scotland has to be deprived of its adult residential college? Can he explain to the House why his office is prepared to fund students who go south of the border to colleges that are akin to Newbattle Abbey, but is not prepared to fund Newbattle Abbey college? Will he come to the Lobby tomorrow, like a real friend of Newbattle Abbey college, when he will get a full explanation?

Mr. Rifkind: I want the resources that are available to benefit the maximum number of people in Scotland who wish to enter higher education. The fact is that in the past year over 6,500 people over the age of 21 entered full-time higher education, of whom only 40 went to Newbattle Abbey. The conclusion that we have reluctantly come to is that the resources that at the moment are going into educating those 40 persons could be much more effectively used to provide the benefits of higher education to many more people than that.

Only last week I was able to announce a £1 million programme of wider access to higher education for people in Scotland over the next three years. That shows that the Government give priority to that area. Newbattle Abbey was initiated when there were no alternative means of achieving higher education for those who had not had that benefit in their earlier years, but such alternatives now exist to a far greater extent than would have been thought possible some years ago.

Mr. Maxton: About 20 minutes ago the Secretary of State said that the Government believed in consultation. If that is the case, will he now tell the House why he made his clear decision and announcement on Newbattle Abbey without consulting the board of governors or anybody else about it? Is that not an odd sort of consultation? Will he now answer the question that was put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie)? What is different about education in Scotland from that in England and Wales? What makes Scotland different? The Secretary of State did not answer that in the previous question that was put to him.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman is putting forward the proposition that there should be uniformity of policy north and south of the border in educational matters, that is interesting when one takes into account earlier comments on other educational matters for which he has been responsible.

We gave the governors of Newbattle Abbey college 18 months' notice of our intention to withdraw funding. They have been making representations since then, as has the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), with whom I have had a meeting. We shall carefully examine the representations that have been made, but the hon. Gentleman had better come to terms with the question whether he wants Scottish education to be decided on the basis of Scottish needs or whether, as he seems to be saying, it should be automatically brought into line with whatever is happening south of the border.

Education Costs

9. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much is spent on the education of each pupil in primary and secondary education; what were the comparable figures in cash and real terms five and 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Between 1978-79 and 1986-87 spending per pupil in local authority primary schools in Scotland increased in real terms by 34 per cent. The corresponding increase for pupils in secondary schools was 26 per cent. I shall arrange for the full details to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Greenway: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on those remarkable figures? The whingeing Labour party in Scotland should tell people the facts, which are that much more is being spent per pupil in Scotland than in England, Ireland and Wales—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the United Kingdom Parliament and the hon. Gentleman has a question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Greenway: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Scots cannot be basically a nation of slow learners or of less fundamental intelligence than the English, Welsh or Irish? So why is so much more being spent per pupil in Scotland than in the rest of the country?

Mr. Forsyth: Education costs £424 a year more per secondary pupil in Scotland than in England. It is difficult to be precise about the reasons for that, but they might include, for example, the fact that in Scotland we have a larger number of teachers per pupil and higher secondary teachers' salaries, and we have had less success than England in reducing surplus places. Most significant of all, the rates burden on schools in Scotland is much higher, being 8 per cent. in Scotland as opposed to 3 per cent. in England. Rates account for no less than 25·8 per cent. of non-teaching costs in our schools.

Dr. Mooney: Will the Minister confirm that the main reason for the higher quality of education in Scotland is that none of our regional authorities have the misfortune to be run by his party?

Mr. Forsyth: I am delighted to have the hon. Gentleman's confirmation that the education authorities are well funded under this Government and are provided

with more staff than are those elsewhere in the United Kingdom. He will no doubt want to reflect that this year expenditure on education in Scotland will go up by about 9 per cent., which is a better performance than that under the Government whom he supported.

Following are the details:

Net current expenditure[1] per pupil in Scotland

	Primary schools		Secondary schools	
	At outturn prices	*At 1986-87 prices[2]*	*At outturn prices*	*At 1986-87 prices[2]*
1978-79	395	771	719	1,403
1983-84	882	1,008	1,368	1,563
1986-87[3]	1,036	1,036	1,764	1,764

Notes:

1. Net current expenditure covers the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.
2. The outturn figures for the earlier years have been revalued to 1986-87 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.
3. The latest information available on actual expenditure is for the financial year 1986-87.

Fort William and Glencoe Ski Facilities

10. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to assist in the development of the Fort William ski area and further development of the Glencoe ski facility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government's policy is that ski development should be initiated and led by the private sector. We are ready to assist, through our agencies, any viable proposals that are put forward.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. I recently spent some time in the Scottish ski resorts—*[Interruption.]* Is my hon. Friend aware that those ski areas have tremendous potential for tourism and the creation of jobs, and that that potential is not being pursued in certain areas? Will he confirm that the way to deal with that problem is through private sector-led activity? The Fort William development is typical of places where jobs could be created for the betterment of the people of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I was delighted that he was able to benefit from Scottish skiing facilities and I hope that many Englishmen will benefit from them in the future. As regards the development of skiing in the Aonach Mor area, my hon. Friend is right in saying that it is important to have private sector input in any forthcoming development. The previous development plans included 84 per cent. funding from the public sector. Clearly that figure was too high for a project that then had questionable viability. We are, of course, prepared to consider further propositions.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Will the Minister arrange to transport all the Conservative district council candidates to the ski slopes of Fort William and Glencoe so that they can get plenty of practice for the massive slide that they will take next Thursday in the district council elections as a result of the poll tax, cuts in housing benefit and the suffering inflicted on the people of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I do not believe that that question is worthy of an answer.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my hon. Friend remind the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) that skiing is one of the fastest-growing participant sports in Scotland? I am sorry that Opposition Members do not enjoy it. Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that where developments take place it is important that they are on a sufficiently large commercial scale so that any developer can properly fulfil his financial obligations in maintaining the environment of the area?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend makes a valid point. Skiing in Scotland is a fast expanding sport, just as Conservative participation in district councils will be fast expanding after next month.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the Minister aware that both the skiing areas that have been mentioned are in my constituency? It might have been a good thing if he had told his hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) that an expansion at Aonach Mor would have been in operation now had the Government taken the positive action towards that development that his hon. Friend appears to be urging upon him.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend urged upon me the strong involvement of the private sector. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) will remember that the previous proposition involved 84 per cent. of public money and the cost per job would have been between £60,000 and £80,000. Given the questionable viability of that plan, that would not have been a desirable use of public funds.

Forestry Products (Isle of Wight)

11. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of forestry products from the Isle of Wight for the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The value of timber and Christmas trees removed from Forestry Commission woodlands on the island between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1988 was approximately £164,000. The value of produce from private woodlands over that period is not known.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that the lack of a broadleaved woodland policy in the past has deprived our world-famous craftsmen and shipwrights of locally grown timber? Is my hon. Friend aware that the wooden ships that sailed out to defeat the Armada off the Isle of Wight, manned by the iron men of England, were built from oak taken from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight? Does my hon. Friend appreciate that, with a county council chairman named Drake, should we have to sail out tomorrow for a similar event we could only do so on pine log rafts?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I assure my hon. Friend that, although the Forestry Commission headquarters may be in my constituency, we are conscious of the interests of the Isle of Wight. Most of the productive woodlands on the island are managed by the Forestry Commission, which is presently restocking with broad-leaved trees where the soil conditions are suitable. My hon. Friend has had an invitation from the manager to visit the woodlands and he will discover that many of the trees are larches, which are suitable for boat building on the island.

Brewing Industry

12. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the future of the Scottish brewing industry.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such representations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister not received any correspondence from Scottish and Newcastle Breweries on the question of theft? What constitutes a theft? Is it when a man steals £1,000 from his building society or defrauds the Inland Revenue of £500 or is it, perhaps, when a church-going director of Scottish and Newcastle comes to Workington, to a development area, and steals the jobs of people working in my constituency? Is he not the thief? Is it not fair to say that in 100 years' time, when we are more circumspect about such matters, it will be the director of Scottish and Newcastle who will be seen as the criminal, and perhaps not the others?

Mr. Lang: Plainly, the hon. Gentleman is an expert on this subject. So far as I am aware, the shareholders of Matthew Brown accepted a takeover bid from Scottish and Newcastle, as they were free to do. I seem to recall that Matthew Brown itself closed down a brewery in Carlisle —Theakston's a couple of years ago.

Mr. John Marshall: Has my hon. Friend noticed the article on page 25 of *The Times* today, from which it would seem that that excellent company, Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, was frustrated in 1985 by highly questionable, if not illegal, activities on the part of the supporters of Matthew Brown plc?

Mr. Lang: I have seen the article to which my hon. Friend has referred. He will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on a continuing DTI investigation.

Rates (Shetland Islands)

13. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Shetland Islands council regarding rates.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a letter from the convenor of Shetland Islands council asking him to reconsider the council's rate support grant for 1988-89.

Mr. Wallace: I know that the Minister is well aware of the deep concern in Shetland among domestic and business ratepayers at the 85 per cent. increase in rates. Does he not accept that for many years the needs element awarded to Shetland Islands council under the rate support grant has been much less—indeed, only half—the assessed need of the islands' council? Given the substantial rates increase, what hope can he give for a review of the rate support grant so that domestic and non-domestic ratepayers will get some relief?

Mr. Lang: I accept that the circumstances of Shetland are exceptional. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have always said that we would be willing to reconsider the position once the Sullom Voe valuation appeal was finally resolved. I am sure he will also appreciate that it is difficult to do this retrospectively when the grant has been fixed for a particular year and the cash has been distributed.

Hospital Patients

14. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were cared for in Scottish hospitals in each year from 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There was an increase in in-patient discharges from NHS hospitals in Scotland of 104,708 between 1979 and 1987. Out-patient attendances increased in the same period by 464,356 and day cases nearly doubled. With permission, I shall arrange to have the information requested published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it not excellent news that the Scots are getting so much treatment? Is it not also the case that even more patients could be treated in Scotland if it were not for the attitude of the Scottish TUC, which is trying to insist that all work within Scottish hospitals is carried out by a closed shop of its own directly employed members at the expense of private sector employees, many of whom are also union members?

Mr. Forsyth: As I understand it, the STUC has called off official action against competitive tendering in hospitals in Scotland and is setting about ensuring that its members take part in the competitive tendering process, which we very much welcome. My hon. Friend is right to point to the success of the Health Service in Scotland and the effects of industrial action. Some 3,500 operations have been lost as a result of the action taken by the STUC, at a time when we have a major waiting list initiative. We are reducing waiting lists, which had no fewer than 20,000 people added to them because of the last round of industrial action organised by trade unions and supported by Opposition Members.

Mr. Darling: The Minister of State will no doubt be aware that tomorrow Lothian health board will announce its option appraisal plan for the replacement of the Royal infirmary in Edinburgh. Can he assure us that when the appraisal is finished the Government will fund the replacement of the infirmary so that it is not downgraded to the status of a district general hospital, and so that it can maintain its status as a major clinical and teaching centre in the United Kingdom and the world?

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, for some time we have been emphasising the importance of Lothian completing the review of acute services so that a decision can be taken as to the best means of going forward with Edinburgh royal infirmary, whether on its present site or on a green field site. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in paying tribute to the success of Lothian health board in establishing so many new capital projects in its area, including the new district general hospital at Livingston, which is one of the biggest capital projects under way in Scotland at present.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Can the Minister state how many hospitals in Scotland have been closed since 1979? Will he state his level of commitment to rural and borough hospitals in Scotland? Will he join in the fight in his own district of Angus to ensure that the maternity units in Montrose and Arbroath remain open to continue their excellent work? Will he state his level of commitment to such hospitals?

Mr. Forsyth: May I enlist the hon. Gentleman's support in the fight to improve the Health Service, instead of

concentrating on attacking a Government who have ensured that out-of-date and redundant facilities are closed in order to invest in new facilities? I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman, as a Scottish National Member, would point to the considerable share of the capital programme enjoyed by hospitals in Scotland. Since 1979 there have been no fewer than 53 new hospital projects costing more than £1 million, and 32 more are in the pipeline, yet the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to ask me about closures.

Following is the information:

In-patient discharges, out-patient treatments and day cases in NHS hospitals in Scotland.

Year ending 31 March	*In-patient discharges*	*Out-patient treatments*[1]	*Day cases*
1979	737,816	5,206,078	80,271
1980	764,301	5,268,984	87,223
1981	785,080	5,367,934	98,044
1982	793,171	5,433,697	104,729
1983	744,436	5,278,411	98,592
1984	809,681	5,519,030	126,721
1985	821,642	5,593,127	132,613
1986	837,044	5,668,199	147,132
1987	842,524	5,670,434	158,841

[1] Out-patient attendances at consultant clinics.

Rating Reform

15. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to monitor expenditure incurred by local authorities in compiling the community charge register.

Mr. Lang: The setting-up costs for the community charge register will be taken into account by local authorities when completing the usual monitoring returns which they send to central Government.

Mr. Adams: Does the Secretary of State agree that the cost is borne by the local authority? Does he further agree that the registration officer responsible for distributing poll tax forms and cards is an employee of the regional council? If he does agree, will he remind the registration officer for Glasgow that he works for the regional council and not for the Government? Apparently that officer does not agree that he is an employee of the council, and has said so both in court and to the press.

Mr. Lang: The already generous 1988-89 RSG settlement has made provision for an extra £12 million to be made available this year to meet current expenditure costs for the setting up of the community charge, in addition to which about £20 million of capital costs have been provided over the past two years.

The powers of the community charge registration officer in Glasgow are clearly prescribed in the 1987 Act. I note that when the hon. Gentleman took his case to court recently he lost on all four counts.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend monitor the cost of non-co-operation of the kind sponsored by so many Opposition Members? As to dates of birth, does he recall that one has to give a date of birth when applying for a driving licence? Does he have any information on whether the Scottish Labour party will insist on people in Scotland giving up driving?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The increased cost resulting from the non-co-operation urged by the Labour party will have to be borne by other community charge payers. As to driving, the one consolation I have is that the Labour party does at least drive on the left-hand side of the road.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister referred to the recent judgment in Glasgow sheriff court. Does he agree that the sheriff made it clear that the card being distributed by the registration officer, which appeared to suggest that people should not exercise their right to take three weeks to consider their position before returning the form, had no legal validity and could be ignored? Will the Minister take this opportunity to dissociate himself from the widely reported allegations by the Secretary of State for Scotland to the effect that those exercising their rights in raising genuine doubts about their role as responsible persons, and in testing the system, as they are legally entitled to do, may be liable to fines and criminal penalties that do not exist in the statute? That form of near-intimidation, or at least of misrepresentation, has been widely resented.

Mr. Lang: I would not dream of dissociating myself from anything said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, when accurately represented. As to the court case, I recall that the sheriff regarded the procedure of issuing postcards as being sensible, reasonable and practicable.

Social and Health Policies

16. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implications for the Government's social and health policies of the recently published preliminary return for 1987 for Scotland by the Registrar General.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I welcome the fact that the preliminary return indicates that infant mortality is at the lowest rate ever recorded. However, I am concerned about the level of premature deaths from lung cancer and coronary heart disease and will continue to promote health education measures.

Mr. McAllion: I am sure that the Minister joins me in welcoming the Registrar General's information that the lowest-ever rate of infant and perinatal deaths and stillbirths was recorded in 1987. However, I draw his attention to a petition printed in today's Order Paper from mothers and members of the Royal College of Midwives in Dundee, which calls upon the Government to face the facts about the under-funding of the maternity services. Does the Minister agree that unless the Government face the facts and provide adequate funding the information from the Registrar General in future years may not be so encouraging?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman takes my breath away. The return from the Registrar General shows the lowest rates ever recorded for stillbirths and of perinatal mortality. That is an example of the success of this Government's investment in the Health Service. It is an example of the success of the Government's investment in the Health Service. It is true that a result of our success in saving infants with a very low birth weight is that they require some six weeks to three months of intensive and special care, and that of course causes intense pressure on

the available cots. However, the hon. Gentleman should acknowledge what is being done in the acceptance of the review body's recommendations on pay for those involved in intensive care in other aspects of the hospital. He should welcome what is being achieved, rather than using it as a means to attack the Government's record, which is excellent.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister have regard to the burning needs and demands placed on the Health Service, both social and medical, and in particular the special implications of the AIDS epidemic on the east coast of Scotland? Is he satisfied that enough money is being devoted, in both social and the medical directions, to cope with the problem in future?

Mr. Forsyth: Yes, I am satisfied. If we were not satisfied, we would be devoting more resources to the problem. We have made an additional £1 million available to the health boards to help voluntary organisations. As for the resources required for local authorities, the hon. Gentleman knows that a working party has been examining the matter. Its assessment of need is well within the additional resources that we have made available for social work, which—I speak from memory—have gone up by nearly one third in real terms under the Government.

Housing Revenue Accounts

17. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the net capital allocations for the housing revenue accounts for Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen district councils for the current financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The net housing revenue account capital allocations for 1988-89 are £7·340 million for Edinburgh, £58·828 million for Glasgow, £8·095 million for Dundee and £10·506 million for Aberdeen. Councils may also utilise the actual capital receipts which they generate within the financial year.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the Minister explain why he refused to meet an all-party deputation from Edinburgh district council, which wished to voice its concern about the housing benefit changes that have had such a traumatic effect on the lives of so many pensioners and others in Edinburgh?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have visited Edinburgh district council within the last few weeks, when I was made fully aware of the problems. I do not recall that particular point being an issue, but it will be fully debated later this afternoon. What council members were worried about was the rate at which council house sales might be carried out, and I hope that I was able to reassure them.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister give an assurance that tomorrow he will meet a delegation of tenants from Cunninghame district, who are coming to lobby and to express their deep anxieties about Scottish Homes and various other aspects of housing policy? Will he come face to face with people's real and legitimate concerns?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have attended meetings of tenants, and I recently addressed the Scottish tenants' organisation in Glasgow. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to meet me and put specific points, I shall certainly meet him. I leave it at that.

Community Care

18. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the recommendations of the Griffiths report on community care; and if he will make a statement on his future policy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are considering Sir Roy Griffiths' proposals and reactions to his report. My right hon. and learned Friend will bring foward proposals for the development of community care policies in Scotland in due course.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Minister let us know when he will publish his answer to the SHARPEN report?

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the SHARPEN report was produced by a working party of the planning council. The council has now had an opportunity to consider it, and I believe that it has been forwarded to the Department. We shall consider the report and the foreword provided by the full planning council, and issue a response in due course.

Mr. Worthington: The Government's response to the Griffiths report was very depressing, given that the failure to produce a coherent policy on community care is causing widespread suffering among the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the elderly. Will the Minister give an assurance that the Government's response will come within the next couple of months, and no later?

Mr. Forsyth: This Government have done more than any of their predecessors for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped and when the party that the hon. Gentleman supports was in power it did nothing to improve facilities in units such as Lennox Castle and the Royal Scottish national hospital. Far from the Government's response being depressing, it was entirely responsible. The Griffiths report raises far-reaching proposals which require assessment, and local authorities and health boards need to be given an opportunity to respond to that report. We have given them that opportunity, and as a responsible Government we shall give the report considered thought before reaching any conclusions.

Mr. McLeish: The Minister has made an extravagant statement about the Government's commitment to care in the community. Is he aware of the tremendous work being done by Scottish local authorities in difficult financial circumstances? Will he accept that the Disabled Persons Services, Consultation and Representation Act, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), has still not captured the imagination of the Government? When will they make a commitment to fund the Act before the Griffiths report is implemented?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman said that I had made some extravagant statements. We have made substantial commitments in expenditure on the Health Service and in transferring resources towards the mentally handicapped, the mentally ill and the elderly, which have been a success for our policies. As to his point about local authorities being hard-pressed for funds, the resources that have been made available to them for social work have gone up by more than one third. It is a pity that they have not devoted more of these resources to providing facilities and devoting

themselves to joint planning. We are making progress on that, but not fast enough. The hon. Gentleman should address his remarks to his friends in local government.

Dr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to use Scottish Question Time as a dressing room? It is bad enough when Members such as the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) turn up as imported token Scots in Scottish Questions, but it is even worse when they decide to sport tartan ties for which any normal Scotsman would demand a volume control. When they decide to take them off and pass them round at the end of Scottish Question Time, it is not only an act of provocation but an act of contempt towards the people of Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: I repeat what I said earlier, that this is a United Kingdom Parliament. The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) had a question on the Order Paper, and many Scottish Members have questions on the Order Paper on other days.

Mr. McKelvey: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not further to it.

Mr. McKelvey: On a point of order regarding the changing of dress in the Chamber. At Scottish Question Time some hon. Members come in wearing a kilt. Would it be in order for them to change from their kilt into trousers at the end of Scottish questions?

Mr. Speaker: Certainly I hope not!

Opposition Day

[10TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Housing Benefit (Changes)

Mr. Speaker: I have to announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. Before we start the debate, I point out that no fewer than 34 hon. Members have so far sought to take part and I appeal for brief contributions. If we have them, I shall be able to call a great many of those hon. Members.

3.33 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its concern at the evidence of the hardships caused by the recent changes in housing benefit to many individuals, particularly pensioners with property which is for sale but has not been sold, modest savings or small occupational or disability pensions; recognises that Her Majesty's Government may not have fully appreciated this degree of hardship in framing the new regulations; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to raise the capital disregard so that no one with less than £10,000 in capital assets loses housing benefit, and to relax the taper by which housing benefit is reduced for claimants with any income above the poverty line.

When the House first debated the changes in housing benefit three years ago, we were repeatedly told that they represented the most fundamental change in the welfare state for 40 years, that they were the outcome of the most profound review of the welfare state for 40 years and that they must be designed to stand the tests of the next 40 years. The then Secretary of State for Social Services, when speaking in the debate on the consultation paper in 1985, said that the changes must prepare the welfare state for the next half century.

Far from standing the test of the next 40 years, the changes in housing benefit have not survived the test of the first four weeks. Already, over the past three days, we have seen a series of hurried and frenetic meetings between Ministers, interrupted on one occasion, so we are told, by President Mugabe, to get together a package of emergency sticking plaster to put over the cuts. Why? Because the system they introduced after that fundamental and profound review has proved harsh in its social consequences and embarrassing in its political consequences.

In the last debate on the issue, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State took care to remind us that it had been thought up three years ago. On the surface, they meant that it should have been opposed then and not now. However, the sub-text of what the Ministers were saying was equally clear. The sub-text was that as they were not in office three years ago, they should not be blamed for the measure, as they were both somewhere else.

The air is already thick with the grinding of alibis. Last Friday, in that curious way that the press have of suddenly being told something, it emerged that the former Secretary of State, the present Secretary of State for Employment, had never supported the figure of £6,000. He had always wanted a figure of £10,000, but the figure of £6,000 was imposed on him. There is only one person who could have imposed such a figure. Yesterday, I read in one of the papers a report still sticky with the thumbprint of Bernard Ingham, which stated that the Prime Minister was furious with Ministers for not foreseeing the row over the new rules. Suddenly, no one wants it to be thought that they had thought up the new rules.

There is no doubt where we stand. From the moment that this issue was first debated, we vigorously opposed the changes. It was our view that one could not without hardship force up rents and force up rates, as the Government have done, and simultaneously cut the housing subsidies to the poorest. It is not just the Labour party that opposed these cuts three years ago. The Child Poverty Action Group, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the National Consumer Council, Help the Aged and every local authority association warned the Government that the cuts in housing benefit were impractical and indefensible.

The only organisation unreservedly to support the proposals on housing benefit was the Institute of Directors —not the most obvious source of advice on the problems and experiences of social security claimants. Nevertheless, Ministers chose to take that advice. Having marched on with the proposals in defiance of the criticism of all informed groups and all representative organisations, they have only themselves to blame if they are obliged to beat an ignominious retreat.

The motion magnanimously recognises that Ministers may not have appreciated the hardships that the change will cause. Eagerly, I turned to the amendment tabled by the Secretary of State for Social Services and his right hon. Friends to see if at least that passage had been accepted by the Government. Sadly, I found that that sentence would also be deleted.

The truth is, as Ministers know, that the two alternatives before them are equally uncomfortable. Either they knew that the changes would cause the degree of hardship that we have witnessed in our surgeries, in which case it was cruel to persevere with them and dishonest to conceal it from their Back Benchers, or they did not know, in which case somebody along the line has been guilty of incompetence on a heroic scale. Charitably, I am inclined to believe the latter explanation.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will the hon. Member explain to the House why it is Labour party policy that those who have capital should be subsidised by those who are on low incomes and have no capital?

Mr. Cook: It is perfectly true that the previous Labour Government, and every previous Conservative Government did not apply a capital rule to the treatment of housing benefit or to the rent rebate system that went before it. It is wholly unjust and unreasonable that people with modest savings of £3,000 to £6,000 should be treated as if they are receiving an interest rate of 20 per cent. per annum. Later in my speech, I shall tell the hon. Gentleman about a particular case in my constituency. I shall be interested to hear if it was Conservative party policy to hit my constituent in that way. My constituent will be equally interested, as she has voted Conservative in all her 84 years.

All the evidence coming in is that the cuts have resulted in financial cuts well in excess of the Government's estimates. We now have the data from the first local authorities that have completed the transfer of claimants to the new assessment. We know how their expenditure under the new scheme compares with their expenditure under the old scheme. The drop is dramatic.

[Mr. Cook]

The Government repeatedly told us that the "savings", as they prefer to express it, would amount to £650 million as against expenditure this year, had the previous system continued. That is an 11 per cent. cut. The experience of every local authority to which I have spoken is that they are experiencing cuts well in excess of that figure.

Glasgow finds that its expenditure has gone down by £22 million, compared with last year. That is a 15 per cent. cut on last year's expenditure, and it is a 21 per cent. cut in what it might have expected to spend this year. If Glasgow's experience is typical, the cuts across the nation are not £650 million; they are £1,200 million.

Nor is Glasgow the worst. In Renfrew, expenditure is down 18 per cent. on last year and it is 24 per cent. down on this year. The most spectacular is my local authority, West Lothian, which is down 25 per cent. on last year and 30 per cent. on this year—almost three times the Government's estimate.

The local authority has supplied me with a table of losers, banded by the amount that its tenants lose per week. It provides an illuminating contrast with the bland assurances given to the House by the Government. Ministers predicted that 8·6 per cent. of claimants would lose over £5 a week. The figures prepared by my local authority's officials, working in the real world and with real tenants, show that 21 per cent. are losing over £6 a week and that a staggering 11 per cent. are losing over £12 a week. The director of finance has already received three threats of suicide from tenants in the past fortnight.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Could I put this in human terms? The case of Miss Turnbull was mentioned last week in *The Guardian*. As a result of the Government cuts, she will be forced to give up her job, because her mother owns a small house, and remove her mother from nursing care, or she will have to put the onus on the owner of the private nursing home either to subsidise the lady, who needs nursing care, or to expel her. Is that what we mean by a caring Tory authority?

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend suggests that there are a number of cases, to which I shall turn in a moment, where, far from providing an incentive to work, the rules make it almost impossible to reconcile family commitments with their work.

Given the unexpected ferocity of these cuts, much talk of "anomalies" is now emerging from ministerial briefings. Out there, apparently, there are 5·5 million anomalies who have just seen their housing benefit cut. In the last debate a fortnight ago, the Minister of State accused us of scouring the country looking for hard luck cases. I assure him that we do not need to scour the country; they tumble out of our mail bags. Those are the kind of letters that I alone have received in the past two weeks. They fall into our surgeries every time we open the door. People ring our offices and our homes.

Having counselled many of those who have been shocked by the loss of their housing benefit, I warn the Government that there are three stages to their reaction. The first is disbelief that the sums can be correct. The second is despair at how they can make ends meet. The third is anger that they should be required to make such sacrifices, an anger that flares all the more fiercely when they compare their losses this month with last month's Budget that conspicuously did not ask for sacrifices from people rich beyond the dreams of anybody on housing benefit.

Let me share with the House some of the cases which I have had to counsel. On Friday I visited a constituent who is an elderly lady living by herself. She retired early due to an industrial injury to her back from lifting refrigerators around a showroom and received severe disablement allowance. She has lost £32·60 a week in housing benefit. After paying rent and rates, her weekly income has fallen from £78 to £47. When I visited her, she was arranging to have her telephone removed. She had just spoken to her granddaughter to explain that she would no longer be able to afford the presents which she used to purchase. A telephone to the outside world and the ability to play one's part in the family are important parts of being able to serve one's retirement in dignity. I cannot get my mind around the idea that there are those who would justify visiting such a devastating drop in income on an elderly person.

Then there are families with children. I received a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Shippam in Wigan who have two children. Mr. Shippam is on a job training scheme. His misfortune is that he receives special hardship allowance, which takes him well over the limit for the housing benefit threshold. He has lost £13 in housing benefit and £6 in free school meals. The total lost to that household is £19 out of a total income of £105. Lest the Government ask us how much that family has gained in family credit, I remind Ministers that Mr. Shippam is on the job training scheme and has been refused family credit, as he is counted as not being at work.

Then there is the case of Mr. and Mrs. Brown of Windermere. Mr. Brown is a gardener who gets take-home pay of £82 a week. On that, plus child benefit and family credit, Mr. and Mrs. Brown bring up four young children. Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Brown get family credit and, yes, their family credit has gone up by £14. But they have also lost £19 in housing benefit, £10 in free school meals and £2 in milk tokens. They are £16 a week worse off, even allowing for the increase in family credit. How does the party of family values reconcile that cut imposed on a couple struggling to hold a family together on a low wage? Mrs. Brown's letter used words to this effect: "Yesterday when I received the notification of housing benefit, I spent most of the day in tears. Today has not been much better."

I turn to the treatment of young people. It is difficult to think of a better way of removing the incentive to work than the way that young people are treated under the housing benefit rules. Because young people are now entitled only to a new junior rate of benefit, they start losing housing benefit at the rate of 85p in the pound on any income over £26. Last week in Norwich I met a chef in the National Health Service earning £61 a week who had just lost £24 a week in housing benefit. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has informed me of young people in his constituency who are employed on £55 a week as wardens of sheltered units. It is a condition of the job that they have to be tenants of one of those units and, therefore, they have no control over housing costs. They have just seen their rent and rates go up sixfold.

These cases will be no worse off—indeed, they might even be better off—if they gave up work, except for the fact that a month ago, perhaps prudently anticipating these changes, the Minister of State took powers to stop their benefit for 26 weeks if they gave up the struggle to square poverty wages with miserly benefits. None of the cases to

which I have referred would remotely benefit from the change in the savings rule which we are told we might hear about this afternoon.

The savings rule is devastating in its impact on those caught by it. I turn to the case of the constituent to which I referred the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed). That constituent is a staunch Tory voter. Indeed, in her letter she said that she wrote to me with "great reluctance", as I was a Labour Member of Parliament. She has just over £6,000. Her only income is a non-contributory pension and the income from £6,000. Together, that gives her a weekly income of £32 a week. She has now lost all her housing benefit. Her weekly rent and rates demand is £29 a week, leaving her £3 a week to live on.

A moment's contemplation shows that such a rule is preposterous and I shall readily give way to the hon. Member for Bristol, East again, if he is prepared to defend his claim that that is Conservative Government policy. Even the readers of *The Sun* have grasped that the rule is unfair and have voted by three to one on *The Sun* hotline to scrap it.

I welcome the fact that the Government, although they will seek to delete that part of my motion calling for a change in the rule, appear to have decided to change the rule. That is quite a turnround from the position of only three weeks ago. We know from the leaked minute of the Cabinet Sub-Committee that, only three weeks ago, the Prime Minister presided over a meeting at which she was plotting even further cuts in housing benefit. Now, instead of more cuts, we are to have higher expenditure. Supply day debates are starting to become expensive for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We must try to make them more expensive.

As Ministers have accepted that part of our motion, I am all the more disappointed that they appear to be resisting the remainder of the motion, because, although a change in the savings rule will be welcome to those people hit by that rule, they are relatively few. To put them in perspective, such a change would help 150,000 claimants. The Government admit that 5·5 million people, the vast majority of whom have no capital to their names, are losing as a result of the changes. If we are to help those people and to relieve the harshness of any of the other cases that I have quoted, we must tackle the sharp and cruel taper which provides such a savage clawback of benefit.

There is one compelling reason why Conservative Members should think about changing that clawback and helping those 5·5 million people. The majority of those people are in Conservative constituencies. Fifty-five per cent. of all losers under the new rules have a Conservative Member of Parliament. On average, every Conservative Member has 7,500 losers in his constituency. To express that point more crudely, in case its significance has been missed, that is more than the majority of 115 Conservative Members.

We have been accused of drafting a motion that embarrasses the Conservative party. It is embarrassing only because many Conservative Members agree with it. If they want to see it passed, they must vote for it. That may be politically embarrassing, but I can assure them that it will be nothing like as politically embarrassing as it will be in their constituencies, if they vote against the motion.

In case Conservative Members are too embarrassed to ask the questions, let me close by leaving the questions that the Secretary of State must answer when he responds to the debate. We were told that the new system would be fairer. Where is the fairness in the way that the system has hit the cases that I have quoted and in the letters that I and my hon. Friends have received? We were told that the new system would target those in need. If those cases that I have quoted are not in need, then who is in need? We were told that the changes would help families with children. It is evident that the changes leave families with children worse off to the tune of large sums of money per week. We were told that the changes would increase incentives to work. The changes plainly penalise families on a low wage, pensioners with part-time earnings and youngsters starting at the very bottom of the labour market.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that the major structure of the housing benefit system would remain substantially the same. The letters that I have received and the cases that I have quoted provide a devastating case as to why that substantial structure of the new system is totally unsound. Tonight the House must vote to take apart that new structure and to rebuild it.

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'recognising that social security spending has risen by nearly 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979, and now totals almost £48½ billion, and that spending on housing benefit last year amounted to over £5 billion and went to over 7 million, or 1 in 3, households in this country, commends Her Majesty's Government for its determination to tackle the complexities and unfairnesses of the old system.'.

So far, the debate has concentrated, as does the motion, on one aspect of social security changes—housing benefit. Before I respond and tell the House about the Government's proposals, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) legitimately asked, my hon. Friends will want me to remind them of some of the substantial achievements that are embodied in the new benefit system. I shall briefly do so.

It is a simpler system, that people can understand. It gives more help for most disabled people and most families with children. In terms of fairness, in many ways it is a major improvement in respect of incentives. Hon. Members will remember the old family income supplement system, whereby a family could be better off earning £75 than £150. The perverse incentives of the old system have entirely gone. The new system has also ended the runaway spending under an abused single payments system, part of the unemployment trap. That was utterly unfair to those in work.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South) *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I shall give way in a second.

The major achievements meant that there would be inevitable changes and that, as hon. Members have recognised, they would be controversial. That was especially true in relation to housing benefit.

Throughout the reform debates over the past few years, Conservative Members did not believe that it was right —they expressed the view many times—to help as many as one out of three families with their housing costs. Therefore, since 1985, the Government have made it clear that we would tackle that. Ironically, in relation to what the hon. Member for Livingston said, the need for

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structural reform of housing benefit was the social security matter of greatest consensus throughout all parts of the country.

Despite what the hon. Member for Livingston said, the Green Paper and subsequent debates produced little disagreement with the structural proposals. I recognise the point that was made. Today's debate and the criticisms are about the effects on some people at the point of the change —I recognise that individuals have been mentioned—but I stress the key point that they are all individuals above the income support level.

It is important briefly to consider the reason for the general agreement that existed on the need for reform of the old system. Two things were critically wrong with it. First, it was hideously complicated—no hon. Member who had constituency surgeries over the years, let alone those who sought to help claimants, would deny that—and, secondly, it was indefensibly unfair.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Housing benefit was a Tory scheme.

Mr. Moore: I shall refer to that point in a moment.

The worst feature of the system was the unfair way in which it operated against people in work. For those out of work and on supplementary benefits, quite properly the old system paid 100 per cent. of rent. For those not on supplementary benefit but with similar incomes, the calculations were based on 60 per cent. of rent. We were in a position that we all knew was ridiculous—someone was much worse off simply because his income came from work, while his neighbour's came from benefit.

Faced with such unfairness or injustice, what can a Government do? *[Interruption.]* That is precisely what we would expect from the Opposition. A Government can do what Opposition Members did when they were in office —nothing at all, because any change would provoke a storm. It is no good Opposition Members pretending that, when they were in office, they did not know about the fundamental unfairness in the problem. They knew about the problems.

In 1976, the Supplementary Benefits Commission highlighted the inequality between the treatment of those in work and those on benefit. It pointed out to the then Government—the Labour Government—that 400,000 families were receiving less than they were entitled to. Faced with the complicated choice between asking for help with housing and approaching their local authorities and social security offices, they made the wrong choice. That was an outrage that the Labour Government ignored. They accepted it and did nothing to tackle fundamental reform.

This Government were not prepared to ignore the problem. The reforms of 1983 and 1986 have got the structure right. What that means—most outside observers accept this—is that people in work, or out of work, and with the same characteristics or level of income, will receive the same level of help. That must be right, and it is a major achievement. The Opposition funked reform, but my right hon. and hon. Friends, rightly, would have wished me to do what I have been doing in the past few weeks—listening carefully to them. They expect the Government to watch carefully and to monitor the changes. *[Interruption.]* I recall that not too long ago we had debates about the social fund and one or two other issues. The changes about which we were talking affect 8·5 million citizens—not simply those changes we are addressing today, which only affect those above income support level.

My right hon. and hon. Friends would expect me to listen carefully, and they have used Parliament and information from their surgeries to draw my attention to problems. They and I would not be surprised if, in the biggest structural change for 40 years, there were not some areas that merited not only concern but action. While they welcomed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very important debate. I know that the whole House is anxious to hear what the Secretary of State has to say.

Mr. Moore: While the overall structural reforms and the many improvements that I have outlined have been welcomed. since the introduction of the new housing benefit scheme, hon. Members—particularly my hon. Friends—have raised a series of concerns about how some aspects of the scheme have worked in practice. I wish to respond to those concerns.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The reform of social security is not only long overdue but wholly welcome, and my right hon. Friend is to be congratulated. The issue causing concern among some hon. Members is housing benefit. It is the Government's policy to encourage local authorities to increase the return on their assets by increasing rents. That places an unconscionable strain on those who have been accustomed to housing benefit but who, because of the £6,000 limit, will no longer receive it. Will my right hon. Friend address himself to that particular point?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will be delighted to hear that I am moving to that point.

I wish to respond to hon. Members' concerns in a number of ways, which I believe recognise the most serious difficulties experienced at the time of the change over. The issue that has been most often mentioned—my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) mentioned it again—in public discussion of the new housing benefit scheme is the capital rule. Most people accept the need to take capital into account and to have some limit. The problem is a difficult one, even given that general agreement.

None of us wishes to discourage people from saving, yet it is clearly wrong that the taxpayer should be expected to pay the rents and rates of people who have some capital and could be expected to draw on it. The question is what the level should be before they turn to their fellow citizens. I recognise that the £6,000 limit in particular has been the cause of concern. I am responding to those concerns today by increasing the limit to £8,000. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend is aware that some of us have been critical not of the principle but of the detail of the reforms. Is he aware, therefore, how we appreciate the way in which he has responded to the advice of his loyal friends, which is particularly wise given that the official Opposition are hopelessly ineffective? What would the capital disregard be today if the figure of £6,000 in the Green Paper of 1985 had

Mr. Moore: If the figure had been indexed up to today's prices, it would be £6,500. In that regard, the increase that I have just announced is substantial. It will bring considerable extra help——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is the Minister saying that, with all the wealth of expert advice that was available to him before these changes, he was incapable of foreseeing the suffering and anxiety that his proposals would cause?

Mr. Moore: No. I am saying that the Government are responding to the very sensible pressures that my hon. Friends and others have put on us to examine the position properly. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House to give the Secretary of State a fair hearing.

Mr. Moore: The increase will bring considerable extra help to a further 100,000 people. It will be effected by a change in the regulations, about which we shall quickly consult local authorities so that it can come into effect as soon as possible. It will cost £30 million.

There is a second question concerning capital where I believe that a change is merited. Under the new regulations, a person entering a care home is excluded from income support from the moment that they become resident if their former home is worth more than the capital limit.

The thinking behind the change is sound. The old system was wide open to abuse by those—perhaps the families of claimants—who made little effort to sell the home, while the taxpayer paid large sums to cover the care home fees. In one instance, the property remained unsold for 10 years.

The new regulation is too inflexible, and we must have regard for the genuine difficulties that some elderly people have faced. I cannot return to the previous position of laying the taxpayer open to exploitation, but I propose to relax the regulation to allow people six months in which to dispose of their property. In exceptional circumstances of genuine difficulty, that time could be extended. Such judgments will be for adjudicators, subject to the usual appeals procedures. The regulations will be introduced soon, but local offices can make payments as though this relaxation had been in force since 11 April.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby) *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown) *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I should like to make one or two further points, which the House might like to hear, but I shall give way once more.

Mr. Bowden: I am deeply disturbed that, if I have understood my right hon. Friend correctly, although he is increasing the basic capital figure from £6,000 to £8,000, he is not altering the basic tariff. If he will not alter the figure of £3,000 at which full housing benefit would become applicable, a pensioner who has £6,000 saved and receives only a state pension will lose over £8 per week. I believe that to be completely wrong.

Mr. Moore: I shall not give way again—*[Interruption.]*—because if my hon. Friend and other hon. Members will listen until I have finished, they might be pleased to hear what I am about to say.

The House will know that we have already acted so as to ensure that where, for example, a wife has to leave the marital home because the marriage has broken down, she will not be excluded from benefit.

These measures are important but are not in themselves sufficient to deal with the difficulties of which we are aware, and which hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Livingston, has raised. There is a group of people on quite low incomes and without significant capital who have lost largish sums in housing benefit because of the interaction of various parts of the new scheme.

One important factor has been ending most local authority discretion to run different schemes of housing benefit. That decision was right. It cannot be fair that in different parts of the country different rates of benefit should be paid and different rules applied. That had to end as part of the reforms, although, of course, we have left it to local authorities to maintain the most widely used discretion in respect of war pensioners and war widows. Other losses have occurred—for example, through ending the old housing benefit supplement. We think it right to ease the transition in such cases.

We do not think it right to compensate for those increases in rents introduced to coincide with the new housing benefit scheme, nor increases in rates. That would cut across our firm purpose to increase local authority accountability. But we intend to offer transitional help to those significantly affected by the changes to the scheme, including the ending of local authority discretion.

I propose to make good those housing benefit losses in excess of £2·50 per week arising from the changeover to the new scheme which have affected pensioners, disabled people, families with children and lone parents. We estimate that perhaps 300,000 people will benefit from this. We will be spending an extra £70 million in this way.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Did I understand the Secretary of State to say that this applies to people on housing benefit supplement, or does it apply more widely?

Mr. Moore: This covers those above the income support level who may have suffered by more than £2·50, if they are pensioners, disabled people, families with children and lone parents.

Parliamentary approval for the payments under this new scheme will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure up to £25 million will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

The payments will be made by my Department through a new central unit, in order to provide the quickest and most efficient response to cases. Clearly it will be some weeks before such a unit can be properly operational, but I can give the House an assurance that the transitional arrangements will deal with the relevant losses to the vulnerable groups which have occurred since 1 April. That includes people with capital of less than £8,000 who have been affected by the £6,000 limit which has been in operation since 1 April. In other words, any payments will be backdated to 1 April.

This proposal meets the concern which has been emerging at constituency surgeries. These transitional arrangements are announced and the money will be for —*[Interruption.]*—the year in question and, obviously, it

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will be kept under continuing review. *[Interruption.]* It will be kept under continuing review, because people's circumstances change.

This proposal meets the concern which has been emerging at constituency surgeries. It is that, despite the substantial improvement in the structure of housing benefit, the change for people who are used to a particular level of help is too abrupt; and that we must act to stop losses which for some represent too high a proportion of their total income. I am confident that we have found the means to tackle that effectively.

The social security reforms which came into effect a few weeks ago have created a fairer, simpler and better targeted system than anything seen previously. Overall, the majority of claimants will be better off or will get the same as before. I have announced today an increase in the capital limit, a relaxation of the rules covering the disposal of properties and, most important, a scheme of transitional help for those who have faced large losses.

The effect of the package of measures will add a further £100 million to the largest ever social security budget. Nothing could better show this Government's commitment to those who need to look to us for help. Because of our extremely successful management of the economy we have been able to respond to the tune of £48 billion a year. I commend the amendment to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call Back-Bench Members, I again make a plea for brief speeches.

4.15 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I have just heard one of the most remarkable speeches in my 18 years in this House. It is rather sad to see a Secretary of State signing his own death warrant. I do not think that he can last very much longer, even after the concessions which have been wrung from him and the Cabinet in the past few days.

It surprised me to hear the Secretary of State set the new capital limit at £8,000 without mentioning the £3,000 bottom limit which has already been drawn to his attention. The effect on those whom he was trying to help will nevertheless be severe. He tried to say that many more people have benefited than have suffered from these changes. That is hard to understand, because I have received many letters from my constituents, as have many other hon. Members. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a great deal of conversation on both sides of the House. I ask for a fair hearing for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Lamond: Yes, I understand why conversations are going on: I am sure that Conservative Members are trying to work out the statement, as we are. It is rather unfortunate—this is a criticism that we can make of the procedures of the House—that the last people to receive any information about such a statement are those who are expected to debate it. Early in the Secretary of State's speech I observed copies of the changes being handed round the Press Gallery, so they have an advantage over us.

Many of my constituents have written to me who cannot bring themselves to believe that the changes will have the effect that they are having. They are angry with their local council because they think that it is responsible for the changes, and that elderly people and mothers who have had to go to hospital, a nursing home or a council home for the elderly are being told that they must sell their homes to finance the cost of staying in that old person's council flat. They do not understand that, and cannot bring themselves to believe it.

I wish to cite one instance from my constituency, because we cannot debate this matter on cold statistics. I know that Conservative Members would like to debate this on percentages and not individual cases, but it is of individual cases that we speak. The changes affect individual people, many of whom are the poorest in our society.

A male constituent works full time as a butcher. He has one son aged two and three daughters between six and 10. This case is authenticated by the chief executive of my local authority. That man's net earnings, working full time as a butcher in Oldham, are £79·02. Although this point does not directly affect what we are discussing today, I would like Conservative Members to take note of that man's wages. We have often heard those hon. Members speak of cutting wage levels, and say that people are pricing themselves out of jobs. If they tried to live on £79 per week take-home pay, with four children, they would have to curtail their lifestyles a little—and so would I.

In addition to the £79, that man has child benefit for his four children of £29, and family income supplement of £25·70. That is a total income of £133·72. Under the new scheme, his family income supplement is replaced by family credit. That amount is increased from £25 to £39. I suppose that he is counted as one of the 5 million or 6 million people who are considered to be gainers under the new system, as against the 1 million losers.

However, if we look at it a little further, instead of having a rent rebate of £22 against his rent of £34, which involves him paying a rent of £11·81, under the new scheme he does not receive any rebate at all. His rent is going up to £37·23, and the cash available to spend on himself, his wife and four children is reduced from £122 to £110. He is £12 a week worse off. In addition, he has lost his three daughters' entitlement to free school meals, which amounts to £9·75 a week. His total available income is now £100·04.

I ask Conservative Members to place themselves in the circumstances of that family. That is my only reason for intervening in the debate. If the Minister is saying that he will not allow rent rebates to be reduced so drastically, I will welcome that alleviating action. However, I am concerned if he sets a time limit, because that family will not be able to improve their circumstances so as to make up the loss of £20 from an income of £120. That man and his wife are very worried by that loss of £20.

I know that many Conservative Members are reasonable people, and I cannot understand how they sleep at night. When people such as this man come to my constituency surgery, weeping about what is happening to them—ordinary decent people, trying to maintain a home and look after a family, working hard but having nothing to spare for holidays or anything of that kind—I find it difficult to sleep at night, and I would if I were a Conservative Member. Whether Conservative Members like it or not, and whether they table clauses saying that

they do not agree with such moves, they are responsible because they support such moves in the Lobby with their votes, so I cannot understand how they can go home and sleep soundly in their beds.

4.25 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I am not prepared to follow the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), although he speaks with great conscience on this matter, in seeking to make such an attack on the position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in this debate. As the first Conservative Member to be called, I must tell my right hon. Friend how appreciative I am of the changes he has made. I will not use the word "thanks" to my right hon. Friend, because this is not an occasion for that word. What we have received from my right hon. Friend is more than that. We have had a rapid and sensitive appreciation that, at least in the housing benefit provisions, anomalies have occurred—I do not want to use the word "anomalies" again—which need some rapid changes.

Two things flow from that. First, I believe that my right hon. Friend and his hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled respond to the pressures that are put upon them by members of the public, by members of our party and, no doubt, by Opposition Members. That responsiveness is a welcome sign.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend has rightly shown the capacity to exert political judgment, when faced with a difficult situation. That is not to say that my right hon. Friend has embarked upon a course in which we shall not support him. Of course we will. Indeed, we fought the election on the reform of many of the structures which have been in place in the social fabric of this land for over 40 years. That is what the electorate expected this Government to do, and that is what we expect my right hon. Friend to do in handling the major issues of social security, which he has only inherited in recent months.

I advise my right hon. Friend that there will be others among his colleagues in the Cabinet—I refer to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment —who would do well to look at the way in which my right hon. Friend has responded to what happens when implementing major changes. I trust that my right hon. Friend recognises that this is not a matter for U-turns, grovelling or anxiety, or even for being particularly outrageous in turning the existing policy. However, the art of the possible and the art of the practicable are two of the essential ingredients of a successful Government. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he has done, although there are two other points which I wish to make.

First, while recognising in the case of housing benefits that the anomalies created were both active in their expression and urgent, that could also be the way in which many other aspects of the major changes that my right hon. Friend has introduced will ultimately give witness. I am a little worried that, in seeking to respond to this and to the other changes announced today, as he has done, he may give the impression that, wherever the shoe happens to pinch, there will be an immediate response.

In the debate three weeks ago, I urged my right hon. Friend to monitor the implementation of the changes. I said that if the Government failed in their commitment to ensure that the majority of people in need will benefit from those changes, my right hon. Friend should amend the necessary regulations. What he should not consider tonight is seeking to offer a panic result to substantial and sudden pressure.

The social security benefit changes represent a watershed in social policy, to which this Government are committed and which are endorsed by the electorate, alongside the changes in education and local authority financing. The changes are a fundamental shift in policy. There will be difficulties, and we as Conservative Members of Parliament will have to bear the brunt. I believe that we can do that in the knowledge that there are occasions when it is right to make changes. This is one such occasion. There may be others in due course. Our task is to support the principle upon which we were elected. I am glad to support my right hon. Friend.

4.28 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): In having to deliver his speech this afternoon the Secretary of State does, in one sense, deserve sympathy from all quarters of the House. As his hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has just said, if political sense prevailed within the Government, this was bound to be an occasion when decisions would be taken which would offer some concessions to Tory Back Benchers in order to try to quell the revolt. It must have been galling to read in the press at the weekend that even allowing for the fact that the Secretary of State would be making a speech that would provide some relief—if not sheer relief—for his Back Benchers he was still having to fight a battle to make the speech in the first place. That does not say much for the support that he has from the closest quarters within the Government. I am glad to see at least one Conservative Back Bencher nodding in acquiescence of that view. However, I shall not name him.

I return to the opening of the debate, when we were reminded by both the Labour spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), and the Secretary of State of the purpose of the social security reviews when they were first set up, with public hearings and so on. One of the principal objectives for which this Government and the previous Administration were aiming was simplification. Following the further rehash that has been announced this afternoon, welcome though aspects of it are, there can be no doubt that the Government are steadily retreating further and further from the simplification that they claim is one of the most welcome hallmarks of the system. They are doing so——

Mr. Moore *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Kennedy: The Secretary of State is disagreeing with me. He should go to the nearest social security office and ask the staff there, who have to cope with what has already been pushed through, how with declining staff resources they will cope with the further changes that have been announced, some of which have been backdated to the beginning of this month, when the original changes were implemented.

The consistent simplification that the Government have always claimed has been departed from, and correctly so, given the changes and the policies that they were going to implement until their Back-Bench revolts of the past few days and weeks.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

The Secretary of State should be under no illusions. He is departing from that principle. I happily give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Beith: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. Is he aware that one change that the staff are having the greatest difficulty in explaining in this now complex situation is that a miner's widow who receives concessionary coal does not have that counted against housing benefit, but a miner's widow who, because her house has been converted by the council to central heating, gets cash in lieu of concessionary coal, has that amount counted against her benefit and it is reduced? My hon. Friend recognises the problems of the staff, but can he imagine trying to explain that to a miner's widow?

Mr. Moore *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Moore: I am trying to be helpful to the hon. Gentleman. Opposition Members should remind themselves that it is the local authorities which handle housing benefit, not, as they in their confusion seem to suggest, my DHSS officers.

Mr. Kennedy: The Secretary of State referred to regulations. The argument that I have just made is that social security officers, who, as the Secretary of State is aware—after all, amongst other things, he is the Secretary of State for Social Services—are having to carry through the bulk of most the social security changes will, like the local government system, have to react to some of the changes that he has announced this afternoon.

The example that my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) gave was excellent, though sad, but it again reveals that this great, sweeping simplification has given rise to further crazy anomalies which are thwarting the very purpose of the Government's plans.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh) *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I give way to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As the North of Ireland has to endure these terrible housing benefit regulations, it is only right that the Secretary of State should be accurate. Housing benefit is not administered by local authorities in the North of Ireland. It is administered by a different agency.

In relation to what the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) has been saying, one problem about the legislation is that those who understand it cannot explain it, and those who can explain it do not understand it.

Mr. Kennedy: I am not sure that that point is as much for me as it is for the Secretary of State, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making it.

I now deal with the specific areas with which the Secretary of State dealt. First, on the question of capital disregard, which has caused so much difficulty and so much revolt on the Conservative Back Benches and in other quarters of the House, I refer to the position that prevailed when the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) served at the DHSS. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is in his place at the moment, although he was here for the Secretary of State's speech.

When at the DHSS, the hon. Gentleman considered the alternative of notional interest, which, in a sense, has now almost been conceded by the transitional arrangements which the Secretary of State announced today, in preference to an absolute cut-off point for capital disregard. Notional interest is the assumed interest that could be earned from any capital owned by a benefit recipient.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Brighton Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) said in an intervention during the Secretary of State's speech, when he referred to the continuing concern over tariff income and the £3,000 level. Given that, prior to this afternoon, above £6,000 there would have been a total loss of housing benefit, surely the DHSS would have done better to stick to the scheme or regime that was preferred by one of its previous Ministers.

In a recent interview in *The Guardian* the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green recalled that, when he was a Minister examining this matter,

> "DHSS civil servants put forward two alternatives. One was a simplification along the lines of supplementary benefit, with a cut-off for claimants whose savings reached £3,000. The other involved deducting only the notional interest from savings when benefit was paid."

The article then said that the hon. Gentleman had

> "examined Treasury costings and found no difference in implementing either scheme."

The hon. Gentleman was reported as saying

> "Civil servants were determined to introduce the first alternative because it was much easier to administer, and I had to fight them all the way.
>
> It is much easier for an official just to cut off the benefit once savings reach such a figure than to work out the interest on savings and then deduct it from housing benefit payable."

If that was the experience of someone who until fairly recently was a Minister at the DHSS, one can only wonder why, when the matter was re-examined by the present incumbents prior to the full implementation of the social security and housing benefit changes, Ministers chose to go down the path that they did with regard to the cut-off point for capital disregard, which, in turn, has led them into this afternoon's partial retreat, with all the resultant administrative considerations.

The second point with which I wish to deal is the disposal of capital income, or assumed capital income, and the fact that discretion will be given to local officers, or adjudicating officers, to waive the rules, as presently constituted, in exceptional circumstances. It is extremely welcome that the Secretary of State has bowed to the understanding that there should be a degree of local and regional flexibility. However, in recognising the correctness and the acceptability of that approach, it is somewhat puzzling why he does not recognise the need for flexibility in the third aspect of the changes that he announced this afternoon—those relating to housing benefit itself.

Even given the assurance—if it can be called that; after all, it is a transitional assurance—about what would happen if someone lost over £2.50 per week as a result of the overnight change in the housing benefit regime in the four categories that the Minister outlined in his speech, we should not be to sanguine about what the Government are doing. It is a transitional arrangement to achieve what was understood to be the Government's objective before the Secretary of State got to his feet this afternoon. It is a

transitional arrangement that may head off a partial revolt in his party—which may have been anticipated—but it will not deflect the Government from their pursual of the policy that has caused so much anguish and anxiety among hon. Members of all parties.

For housing benefit, it would surely have been better to announce a much higher earnings disregard and a lower marginal tax rate—the 65 per cent. taper—at the beginning, than to have a transitional scheme of this sort now. I appreciate that there was movement in that direction in the Minister's speech today, but surely it would have been better to do as I have suggested, both in the conception and in the delivery.

The disabled and the severely disabled stood to lose much as a result of the social security changes. The disabled premium has to an extent been an over-simplification in response to the myriad single payments and different benefits for which a severely disabled person could qualify. Now, however, by going too far in the opposite direction, the Government have left great anomalies.

The Minister singled out the disabled as one of the four categories, and the emphasis that he put on helping them was welcome, but the Government must concede that if their concern and convictions were as strong as they claim in this area of social policy they would have been slightly more anxious to implement fully many of the changes heralded by the passage of the Disabled Persons' Rights Act 1987 than they have been. From the Report stage of that Bill and from social services questions it has become all too clear that changes in line with the provisions of that legislation have been the result of haranguing by Opposition Members rather than of genuine progress initiated by the Government. The changes on disability in today's announcement must be seen in that context.

Finally, the Minister was at pains to talk about the need to encourage greater incentives by the changes to social security. Single parents are among those who will suffer most from those changes, even after today's announcement, and they will suffer because of the incentives with which the Secretary of State was concerned. Before the changes of 11 April, single parents were assessed as a couple for the purposes of housing benefit. I accept that there is now an additional premium of just over £8, but the 65 per cent. taper for withdrawal will leave many single parents signficantly worse off in low-paid employment than they were on state benefit.

Even after the alterations to the scheme, that was not the original intention or objective of the Government. So when the Secretary of State assesses the effects of the transitional provisions that he has made today I hope that he will pay particular attention to single parents, whom he highlighted in his speech and who have suffered so much as a result of the initial changes. I suspect that they will continue to suffer, even allowing for the transitional provisions.

In conclusion, we should not allow the concessions——

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The hon. Member has already said "Finally".

Mr. Kennedy: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is so obviously hanging on my every word.

The concessions at the margins that these changes bring about should not allow us to obscure what is happening at the heart of the tax and benefit policy of the Government. This policy has been clear from the trio of debates that we have had this week. On Monday we discussed the poll tax, which will hit some of the poorest because of its flat-rate system. On Tuesday we debated the tax-cut provisions, which give the most to some of the most affluent people in society. Today, we have heard of a welcome change in housing benefit which arose because the poorest would have suffered from the alteration in Government policy that was implemented from the beginning of April.

Taking those three components together, it is clear that the rich are still benefiting most and the poor are receiving something only because of extreme pressure from both sides of the House. That is not a moral pursuit of policy, and it will not command our support in the Division Lobby tonight.

4.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): During the debate on the Social Services Green Paper in 1985, I urged the Government to consider the implications of the proposed housing benefit changes, saying that I could not believe that the Government really intended to penalise 4 million pensioners.

In the context of the motion before us the House should look back briefly at what has happened to housing benefit since April 1983, when changes were made which meant that 1,150,000 pensioners suffered losses and 120,000 lost all housing benefit. In November 1984, 1,200,000 pensioners lost further entitlement and another 210,000 lost all housing benefit. In November 1985, a further 1,470,000 pensioners lost benefit and an additional 270,000 lost all entitlement. In April 1987, 2,600,000 pensioners lost some housing benefit entitlement, with a further 60,000 losing all entitlement. In April 1988, about 2,570,000 pensioners lost some entitlement and 750,000 lost all their entitlement to housing benefit.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): My hon. Friend must be aware that in 1978 the Government were spending £1·24 billion on housing benefit. By 1987-88 that figure had risen to £5·2 billion—a colossal sum. Should that figure have been bigger?

Mr. Bowden: If my hon. Friend will listen to my arguments, I am sure that he will fully understand the position.

My hon. Friends and the Government sometimes pose a basic question: why should taxpayers' money be used when people have what some would describe as substantial savings? On the face of it, that is a convincing point, but let us consider the position again.

The generation of pensioners that I am discussing is the wartime generation, which made tremendous sacrifices and suffered great hardship. Those pensioners proved themselves to be one of the great exceptional generations in the history of the British nation. They were a generation that in most cases had little or no opportunity to buy property, and every pound that they saved represented a real struggle, a struggle that today's younger generation cannot contemplate or understand.

The House will be aware that, as each general election goes by, more and more younger Members join the House and fewer and fewer older Members remain. Therefore, fewer Members remember world war 2, lived through it, and faced the sacrifices that went with it. Therefore, what

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that earlier generation suffered—the loss of life and the number of war widows—is no longer fully appreciated by the House.

That wartime generation, unlike almost any other, prepared for its retirement. What happened to those who scrimped and saved and gave up holidays, smoking and drinking to manage to save a little? Those people retired in the 1960s and early 1970s and, although they would not be rich, they believed that they would live in an era of relative peace and prosperity. In the 1970s and early 1980s, however, they found the value of their savings totally destroyed, largely as a result of Labour Government policies. I for one will never forgive them. At the time of those policies we declared that we recognised the problems faced by those people and that we intended that housing benefit should be some small compensation for the total destruction in the value of their savings.

Let us link those savings to the employment pensions that some, by no means all, of that generation had. In the 1960s and early 1970s the majority of people in that category retired on a non-inflation-proof employer's pension. The House will be aware that, when we compare the value of a 1960s and early 1970s pension with the pension today, it is virtually worthless. For that reason the circumstances of that generation are different from any other generation. That is why it is totally justified to use taxpayers' money to give some compensation to that group who, through no fault of their own, now find themselves on the financial breadline.

On many occasions we also said—how often have I listened to the speeches of my right hon. and hon. Friends, especially when we were the Opposition—that we should give help to those with just a little bit above the state minimum. Sadly, we are not doing that to the extent that we should. The wartime generation saved. It was responsible and thrifty, but now it has been penalised.

I have the greatest respect for my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled. On 23 March he sent me a letter in which he said:

"The April changes are not cuts."

I wish he would tell that to the thousands of pensioners in my constituency. I wish he would tell that to the war widow who has £6,200 in savings and, as a result of the recent announcements, has lost £15 per week.

Let us consider the announcement that was made today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I hope that I have got it clear, but it is difficult for us to absorb the exact details and implications. If I have got it wrong, I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will correct me immediately. As I understand it, the announcement means that the maximum limit for capital will go up to £8,000. It will still mean, however, that if a person has £8,100—there will be many pensioners on the basic pension who have no other income or savings apart from that sum—he will lose benefit in excess of £10 per week. If people have savings of £7,900 we have a guarantee, as I understand it, that they will not lose more than £2·50 per week for one year. What will happen at the end of that year?

The Government must do a lot of hard thinking and there must be more revisions and changes. I must tell the Government and all my colleagues that this problem will not go away. Until all the British people believe that justice has been done, we will, quite rightly, be showered with letters and cases will appear at our advice surgeries in ever-increasing numbers.

Let us consider further the implications of today's announcement. I have some rough figures on the information given that may not be exactly accurate, and I ask the indulgence of the House and the Minister. As I understand it, it is still true that a pensioner aged 65 with nothing other than the state pension and an occupational pension of £10 per week, together with savings of £8,100, will still lose £12 a week housing benefit. In other words, his entire occupational pension is wiped out and is of no use to him.

There are many changes still to be made. I congratulate the Government on the start that they have made and I give full credit where it is due. The Government must, however, do a lot more thinking regarding the implications of the recent changes.

I welcome this major step in the right direction, but I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that my original intention was to go into the Opposition Lobby, as I have done in the past. In view of what the Secretary of State has said, I hope only to abstain. I shall listen extremely carefully when my hon. Friend replies because I need some positive hope not just for one year, but for the future. We must ensure that we do not continue to neglect the pensioners.

4.56 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): It is a pleasure, as always, to follow the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). During his speech I was reminded of a debate on procedural changes in the House, which was introduced by R. A. Butler. On that occasion he said that the Government would find it impossible in the House of Commons were it not for the thick Tory squires behind him. He then gently turned round to smile at them. One can understand why Mr. Butler did not become leader of the Tory party.

Mr. Cormack: Where are the squires?

Mr. Field: They have gone as well.

If the Government had 100 Members like the hon. Member for Kemptown, they would be in much greater difficulties than they have been in the past few days.

It is a convention of the House that if one intends to attack an hon. Member, one gives him notice. Therefore, I am sorry that the Secretary of State is no longer present, although I note that a message is now being sent out to get him. I shall speak extremely slowly until he arrives. I hope that it will not damage his future career if I say that today I thought he gave his best performance since becoming Secretary of State for Social Services. He can draw a moral from his performance: that, when defending the social security reforms, he goes down better with his Back Benchers if he comes to the House with a few hundred million pounds in his pocket. Perhaps in the next few weeks we shall see even better performances from him.

The difficulty that we face is that many of us had prepared contributions, but, having heard the Secretary of State, we are confused as to what he announced. Therefore, I suppose that we must also congratulate him on another score. So that we shall not continue to be

confused, the basis of my contribution will be some questions to the Minister. I shall be happy to give way as I go through so that we can be clear about the changes.

We are told that no one will be worse off by more than £2·50 a week. Does that include the 20 per cent. rates payment, or is that separate?

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Field: It is separate. That is one point that has been clarified. Later, perhaps the Minister can tell us why they hit on £2·50 a week.

That ties in with another question: what would have been the cost if full transitional protection had been offered to those in receipt of housing benefit? The group about which I wrote to the Prime Minister was covered by housing benefit supplement. That tells us something about the Government's guarantees on transitional arrangements. Prior to housing benefit we had a system of locally run housing rent rebates and allowances and a rate rebate scheme.

The Government brought in a new scheme. Under the old scheme, people qualified for supplementary benefit if their income was below the scale rate, plus their housing costs. Under the housing benefit scheme, the housing cost was transferred to the new scheme. Because state pensions were a few shillings above the level for supplementary benefit, many pensioners were floated off supplementary benefit but gained little or no help from housing benefit. Therefore, they were substantially worse off and were many pounds below the supplementary benefit poverty line.

In order to protect that group, the Government introduced housing benefit supplement. However, that was abolished a week before the new scheme came into existence. Until then all changes in housing benefit supplement had been made by the affirmative resolution procedure in the House. The week before the new scheme came into being, changes in housing benefit supplement were made by negative resolution. In other words, we did not have to debate them. The effect of the change was that people's incomes fell drastically in the first week but they did not qualify for benefit under the transitional arrangements because they were already regarded as having a lower level of income. Can the Minister of State tell us whether all those who previously received housing benefit supplement will be protected after they have made the first £2·50 additional rent payment?

What did the Secretary of State mean when he said that transitional arrangements will be kept under constant review? When challenged, he said that people's circumstances change. We know that. As their income rose, they would automatically be floated off the transitional protection. That would not alter the structure of transitional protection. We want to know whether the Government intend to buy votes tonight by giving transitional protection for a year. Will transitional protection remain until no one qualifies for it because increases in pensions and other benefits will have taken everyone beyond the qualifying levels for the amount of support that was announced by the Secretary of State earlier?

Those are questions to which we desperately need answers if we are to make sense of the debate as it progresses. Conservative Members do not like to hear the case being put so bluntly, but we must pay them a compliment for the changes which are being brought about by the Government. The last few hundred years of English history show that one of the greatest struggles has been by the poor trying to get money from the rich. Since 1979 we have seen an attack by the rich on the poor. Conservative Members do not like it. We see cuts in the income of people who are on income support——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Can the hon. Gentleman assist me? How does one define the rich, the poor, and wealth?

Mr. Field: I advise the hon. Gentleman, if he has not done so already, to have a word with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who knows exactly who is rich and exactly who is poor because he has been cutting the level of income of many poor people.

Over the past few weeks, we have been debating cuts not in the rate of increase in benefit but in rates of benefit. Despite the effect of today's statement, many of our constituents will suffer a cut in benefit each week of at least £2·50, plus a 20 per cent. rate payment, plus, for some, the loss of any increase in benefit because they were protected by the transitional arrangements. That is what I mean by the fundamental change that the Government have brought about. We must take back the message to the country so that people understand more clearly next time they vote than they did last time.

5.5 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): The review of social security rightly began by asking the fundamental question, where does poverty lie? In a period when pensioners enjoy occupational pensions and often own their own houses, the inquiry discovered that poverty is now concentrated largely on low-income families, on single-parent family groups and on the disabled, and that whereas 20 years ago pensioners retired just on the state pension and needed widespread recourse to additional benefits, they are no longer, on average, in the same predicament. It was important that the review, when implemented as a new benefit system, should recognise that fact. The new system rightly gave most of the increased resources to those most in need. That I welcome, and substantial amounts were put on the table with that in mind.

The second important point was that the implementation of the review should take place against the background of spreading economic prosperity so that money was available to provide additional resources for the benefit system. How much I welcome the fact that our economic success means that in this year there will be £2,000 million extra going into welfare and almost £2,000 million extra going into health. So almost 3p of income tax has been allocated to increases in welfare payments. I compliment the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues on obtaining those resources while the Chancellor was still able to reduce tax rates across the board, particularly to help those on lower incomes out of the tax and benefit trap.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the fact that 3·5 million people do not earn sufficient to pay income tax in the first place, even under the Chancellor's Budget? They will not benefit at all. Will he also comment on the fact that, as a precondition

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of the introduction of the poll tax, everyone on housing benefit has to pay a 20 per cent. rates contribution, which means that everyone will suffer a 20 per cent. cut in housing benefit?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman forgets that all those on income support are compensated for the 20 per cent. of the rates they pay. He also forgets that the reason why some of those people are no longer in the tax net is that the Government have taken almost 2 million lower paid people out of taxation altogether and made a substantial improvement in their lifestyle because they no longer have to pay that tax.

What we have seen this afternoon and will see in the rest of the debate is an Opposition in complete confusion. They came here with speeches designed to attack small elements of the scheme which has rightly been amended by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Those prepared speeches are vacuous and unnecessary, because the necessary fine tuning has been accomplished. We also find that Opposition Members are forced into defending every element of the old system.

Mrs. Beckett: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to refer to vacuous and empty speeches, he should read his own words of a couple of weeks ago, when he denounced the Opposition for being so stupid as to call for changes in the regulations.

Mr. Redwood: It was my right hon. and hon. Friends who drew attention to some provisions that needed amending. I welcome their interventions and am delighted by my right hon Friend's response. The Opposition are now in the position of having to defend every element of the old system, knowing that, in practice, it was rotten. Have they forgotten the fact that, if claimants' circumstances changed, they had to apply week after week to establish whether they qualified for special individual payments? Did the Opposition like the system under which, if people were poor, they had to go to the benefits office and reveal many details time after time if they wanted one extra item that was beyond their budget?

Is it not much better that premiums should be built into benefit rates once and for all, so that, once people qualify, they may enjoy additional income without means testing? Do the Opposition wish to return to the means testers' charter which was the special payments system? Do they wish to return also to the situation that was common in the mid-1970s, when 200,000 people lived in families having to face marginal tax and benefit withdrawal rates of more than 100 per cent and who, if they worked, were worse off by the extent to which they derived an income from that work? It was a crazy arrangement, and I welcome the system of family credit, which means that everyone in the family unit who wishes to return to work, now that jobs are more widely available, is not confronted by a tax and benefit withdrawal rate of more than 100 per cent., which is the economics of the madhouse.

Do Opposition Members want a return to the situation of 1975 and 1976 when, under a Labour Government, they were compelled frantically and frenetically to ask questions of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Social Services about which benefit might be cut next, whether the Christmas bonus to pensioners would be withdrawn, and whether the real value of incomes and savings risked erosion by the massively high rate of inflation? They had to ask also whether the value of benefits would wither away because inflation was then so high. The present Government uprate benefits in line with prices and keep inflation under control, so that people who have made provision for their future, and who have retirement savings, will enjoy the benefits of them.

The Opposition record on social services and welfare was atrocious. It was a story of cuts, and of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who boasted in the House that £1,000 million had been cut from the budgets because the IMF had forced him to do so; proudly claiming that there had been real cuts across the board in public spending. Not only do the present Government not make overall real cuts in public spending, but, because of the successful economy and their prudence in so many other areas, they manage to provide growing real resources for health and welfare—*[Interruption.]*

How much Opposition Members dislike the truth can be gauged by the level of their barracking when one tries to point out their record, which was so mean on the poor. Why is it that we have been compelled to increase benefits to the disabled by 80 per cent. in real terms? It was because the benefits of the mid-1970s were so mean that they were an affront to both Opposition and Government Members. The Opposition would probably find it impossible to rise in defence of the real levels of disablement benefit that existed in the mid-1970s, and they would condemn the Government if all they had done was preserve those real levels and not allow the disabled to benefit from the country's growing prosperity.

I am delighted to support a system which means that no longer will 400,000 families have to face the impossible task of working their way through the complex system to secure the benefits to which they are entitled. I am delighted to defend a system that provides people with an incentive to work, to provide for themselves, and to defend an economic policy that has delivered a 21·5 per cent. improvement in real living standards and incomes for those on half average earnings. That is true welfare policy in an economy that works; an economy that produces the goods and which rewards people across the scale.

In a recent poll, people asked about Labour party policy said that they did not deny that the Opposition would like to see benefits increased, but did not believe that Labour would ever be able to deliver the goods and to afford the benefit increases that they wanted to see. This Government not only want to see benefits increasing for those in most need, but they produced those benefits. They are a Government who deliver the goods and who have increased the prosperity of all the people.

5.14 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I shall be brief because I know that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends wish to contribute to the debate. I associate myself with most, if not all, of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). He is a proven fighter on behalf of pensioners, and I pay tribute to him.

Every Member of Parliament has a right and a duty to bring to the House the benefits of his or her constituency experiences. Their sum total must contribute to the overall breadth of knowledge on which the House draws when

debating and passing legislation. Unfortunately, today we are discussing the effects of a fait accompli—the new social security legislation which has caused such misery and suffering since 11 April.

Before coming to the House, I was a councillor in my constituency and, before that, chairman of my local community council and tenants' association. Therefore, I have been involved in public life for more than 10 years, but I have never known such desperation as that seen since 11 April. I have received reports from housing offices within my constituency which have witnessed the most distressing scenes as senior citizens have broken down in tears when informed of cuts in their housing benefit.

If any section of the community deserves our support, it is the present generation of senior citizens. They came through depressions, fought and won for us the second world war, rebuilt the country after that war, and played a major role in its economic recovery.

I remind the Government also that, along with us, they encouraged that generation to provide for the future and to be thrifty. We are seeing that same generation now being penalised by the Government for their thriftiness and sense of responsibility. The changes in housing benefit are causing hardship, with 0·75 million pensioners losing all entitlement, while another 2·5 million will have their housing benefit reduced. If the changes announced today will help in that situation, they will be welcome—but I submit that they will give too little, too late.

I make no apology for citing the specific case of an elderly couple in the Castlemilk part of my constituency. They are both 73 years of age and the husband has a works pension amounting to £33 weekly for industrial deafness. Before the changes, the couple paid rent and rates of £5·69 per month. Now they hve to pay £98 per month, with no increase in their income; they must find from somewhere an extra £90 a month. The main reason for that change would seem be that the husband's works pension is now included in the calculation, whereas before it was regarded as compensation for a medical condition. Perhaps that is the worst example I have encountered, but there are many others where housing benefit cuts have resulted in a dramatic decrease in senior citizens' total weekly income.

I do not believe that the Government Benches are full of evil men; many of them have a social conscience, in the tradition of one-nation Tories. I appeal to those Conservative Members who do not like what is happening to join us in the Lobby tonight. That way, the Government will realise that they cannot continue along the path of social injustice. It would be easy for us on these Benches to fall into the trap of allowing the Government to commit electoral suicide, as the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said, but we must try to change their approach by vigorous opposition. We look for further changes and moves towards helping senior citizens and other sections of the community, and I ask all fair-minded Conservative Members to join us in the Lobby tonight.

5.19 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Many of us, while canvassing in our constituencies at election time—or, indeed, in our surgeries—have been faced with people complaining bitterly that they are unable to claim benefit of one sort or another because they are just on the wrong side of the threshold. Those same people are often able to point out others who live in the same road, or whom they have known all their lives, who can claim benefit. They sometimes complain that those who have been profligate can claim benefit although they, who have been thrifty, cannot. To explain that position is one of the hardest tasks that a Member of Parliament can face.

The current reforms improve the position relating to income support. The threshold has been raised from £3,000 to £6,000, and Opposition Members should recognise that the people concerned are now better off. When it comes to housing benefit, however, there is no getting away from the fact that the position is substantially worse. I believe that we must make a fundamental choice. We can accept a system in which there is a cut-off point, wherever that cut-off point may be. Such a system will leave more resources for the really badly off, such as the disabled and families on low incomes, who have gained from the reforms.

The alternative, proposed by the Opposition in the Standing Committee, is universal benefit, much of which would go indiscriminately to the better-off. The corollary would be many people paying taxes on the one hand, and receiving money back inefficiently in benefits on the other. The losers would be the really needy.

I believe that it is far better to have a targeted system. If we believe in such a system, we must accept a threshold, with all the inequity that it implies. The original £6,000 capital limit may have been too low, and it is possible that the proposed £8,000 limit is also too low. We must recognise, however, that wherever the level had been set, we would have received exactly the same complaints from those on the wrong side of it. If the limit had originally been set at £10,000 or £15,000, we would have been told that a nest egg of £15,000, in this age of generous redundancy payments and lump sums, is not very much.

Before Opposition Members become carried away by their own self-righteousness, it is worth remembering that under the last Government, the threshold for the main benefits was below even the old £3,000 limit that obtained until these reforms. It is also a fact that many who are now on the wrong side of the new £8,000 limit are paying far less tax than they were before, far less than they paid under the Labour Government and, indeed, far less than they would pay under the system of universal benefits proposed in Committee by the Opposition.

Under the old system, many who were able to draw housing benefit—many, but not all—were relatively well off. It is worth remembering in particular that since 1979 pensioners' incomes have grown, on average, twice as fast as those of the general population, and four times as fast as they did in the 1970s. Those people have often gained from the success of industry and the City, through their pension funds and their investments—institutions that the Opposition despise, deride and oppose.

On the other hand, I believe that the Opposition and many other critics of the reforms have ignored one of their true weaknesses. Although some of the worst of the poverty earnings traps have been partially dealt with for those on very low incomes, the trap remains very severe for many single people on low incomes, discouraging them from taking jobs. Perhaps, rather than concentrating on the relatively well-off, we should have concentrated on the groups who are not so well off and have no savings at all.

It seems to me illogical for people on the one hand to say that they are saving so that they need not be dependent, and on the other hand to demand benefits, although they have some savings—not all of which they

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

would be required to use up before gaining benefit. While all the fuss has been going on about a sector of society that is relatively well off—I emphasise the word "relatively"—critics have often ignored the fact that groups such as the disabled and low-income families are often substantially better off as a result of the reforms. That salient fact seems to have passed beneath the notice of the pontificating prelates and the Pavlovian pundits who automatically salivate with sneers of "obscene", "offensive" and "a war on the poor", whatever the Government's policy, without even bothering to find out the truth of the matter.

The fact is that any realistic system of social security will contain injustices and inequities. The safety net will inevitably catch those who have fallen on hard times through no fault of their own, as well as those who are playing the system for all it is worth. It will also unavoidably miss out many who have been careful and thrifty, and who have savings. The Opposition are quite within their rights in trying to make partisan profit out of that, but our job on the Conservative Benches is to explain why the system has to be as it is, not to pretend that there is a simple, magic solution, or to add interest to the insults of our opponents.

5.26 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I am still amazed by the facility with which some Conservative Members can justify the way in which the simplification of the system has struck millions of people in Britain.

My constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) cover the borough council of Ogwr in south Wales. The council sent out 17,000 forms for the introduction of the new system. Three thousand people did not return them, probably because they saw immediately that they were no longer eligible for benefit—although, to be fair to the council, it is to circulate those people again to check whether that is the case.

Of the 14,000 who returned the forms, on the first day on which they received their new rent and rates assessments 1,400 people contacted the council to say that there must be some mistake. In the first week, 6,000 took that course. The officials in the council, working rapidly, effectively and efficiently, checked all 6,000 claims and found that the increases were, unfortunately, exactly as they had been assessed.

If the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) thinks that this is just a criticism of small elements within the system, he must have both a small mind and a small heart to still think that when he hears of some of the effects of the system on individuals. I should like to mention four such cases this evening.

The first concerns a Mr. Williams, who lives in Bridgend. He is a pensioner, an ex-miner who suffers from silocosis and whose wife is an invalid. He fought in the Royal Navy during the second world war. He finds that, as a result of the Government's munificence and their simplification of the benefits system, he is £21·63 a week worse off, and he has to find the money out of a relatively small income.

In my village of Cefn Cribwr, a family receiving a disability benefit is £19 a week worse off. Down the road, in the village of Kenfig Mill, a disabled pensioner is £17 a week worse off. A man receiving a special hardship allowance is now £14 a week worse off. In the borough, the worst case is of a family that is £25 a week worse off because of the new system.

If Conservative Members think that the simplification of the scheme is something to be lauded, they are mistaken, because over half the people in Ogwr borough council who were receiving housing benefit are now worse off as a result of the changes. The changes introduced today will mean that a few of them may be better off, but what is the promise for those who have been worst hit—those on disability pensions and benefits of one sort or another, and those who used to receive special hardship allowance but who have lost all that because of the loss of local authority discretion? We have been told that they will receive transitional help, but they will automatically be £2·50 worse off. They have lost that sum straight away.

Year by year, the situation will be reviewed. How will Mr. Williams, the pensioner in Bridgend, feel when he loses only £2·50 now, but with the prospect that next year, or the year after, he will suddenly have to lose the extra £20? It is not worth carrying on with such a reprieve. It would be far better if the Secretary of State had announced that, although the £2·50 will be taken, the Government will not take any more. Unfortunately, he did not make that promise.

What are we to say to people who are affected by the so-called tariff income rules? As far as I understood the announcement, nothing is to be done for them. They have savings of over £3,000 and they will be assessed on a fictitious rate of interest. Virtually no individual with savings of a few thousand pounds will be able to achieve that rate of interest, but benefit will still be based on it, and on a notional rate of income that is far above the real income that they will receive on the interest from their savings. Why could the Secretary of State not have announced that the real rate of interest will be used in assessing people for housing benefit? Why could he not announce that where people are saving to buy a car under the mobility allowance scheme, those savings will be excluded completely?

While some small but welcome reliefs have been announced, the simplification of the system has resulted in gross injustice for many millions of people. Unless the Secretary of State is prepared to recognise that and, for example, to make the taper far less steep, he will get more complaints and letters about individuals who are suffering and we shall have more opportunities to bring this matter on to the Floor of the House.

5.33 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It was quite evident that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) had written his speech before the debate. He paid no attention to the substantial concessions and adjustments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) paid minimal attention to them, but not much more. It was high time that we sorted out the appallingly complicated system of benefits that had grown up haphazardly over decades. By and large, the Government have done an exceedingly good job. Inevitably, with such far-reaching changes in a system that has set rigid over many years, rough edges occurred. It is the duty and the privilege of the Government to listen to the views of Members of

Parliament who are closely in touch with their constituents and can discover what those rough edges are and pass on that information.

I come from an area where wages have never been high, but my thrifty constituents have always saved a high proportion of their incomes for their old age and to preserve their independence. The £6,000 cut-off point for housing benefit was too low, and I am delighted that it is to be raised to £8,000, with the extra money that will be needed to meet this change coming from the contingency reserve, which exists for exactly such a purpose.

I also feel strongly that if an elderly person or a couple find that they can no longer cope at home and have to move into a residential home, they should be given ample time to sell their home before having their benefits cut. Houses do not sell as rapidly in my part of the world as they do in the south-east. This is particularly important to us, and the change announced today will be very welcome; it is proof that the Government do not merely listen to what we have to say, but act on what they find in practice to be cases of hardship. I am grateful to them for so doing.

5.36 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): When we hear speeches such as that made by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), in which hon. Members say that they are near to their constituents, when we hear, as we have heard this afternoon, millionaires talking about what they understand by poverty, we are getting near the bone. When one represents an area where many people—not a few—are so desperately affected that the money taken from them prevents them from being able to buy food or to heat their homes, we know what poverty is about.

The problem with transitional help is that, by its very nature, it is transitional. It ebbs, and those who are now in a desperate plight and who will be helped by this afternoon's announcement will eventually face the same poverty and dilemmas at the end of the transitional period. We have been trying to relieve them of those problems through our debates and the pressure put on the Government over the past few weeks.

As the whole intention of these changes was to save £640 million, to transfer it to some of those who have spoken this afternoon and who have benefited so much from the tax reliefs for which Conservative Members voted, in the end those whom we represent will be the losers. This affects not only those who are on transitional arrangements, but those who face poverty and who are now coming into the system, and who will have to face the problems that we and the media highlighted to bring pressure to bear on the Government.

For these people, the problem will not go away. For example, in the city of Sheffield, one individual lost £24·70 a week. He will receive help now, but because it is transitional, it will run out and eventually he will lose the £24·70. There is also the example, of Lottie Green, a widow. Her husband deferred spending the money that they could have spent, to provide a little pension, and she will lose £11 a week. It will take longer for that loss to come into effect. The noose will be tightened gradually, but it will tighten, and that £11 will be lost.

Mr. and Mrs. Grant, who live in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie), will lose £14 a week. They will lose it more slowly. People who are currently coming into the system will also lose. That is the reality of a situation that exists so that the Secretary of State for Social Services can eventually take hundreds of millions of pounds from the most needy in our community and pass it to the Treasury.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House what mole or other informer he has in the Treasury or in the DHSS who informed him that what he prophesises will be the case? I know of no such expectation.

Mr. Blunkett: The information was given in the House by the Secretary of State for Social Services on 19 November last year and appears in *Hansard*. Those were the figures. A week last Monday, the Secretary of State for the Environment admitted to the House that so-called concessions on the poll tax rebate would be taken from housing benefit. This afternoon we have to ask, who in the system will be the losers and will have to pay for the concession that has just been announced?

Although we sympathise with those who have capital of more than £6,000, the capital sums are not the real issue. The real issue is that the difference in the tapering arrangements has hit so many widows and pensioners just above the income support level. Those people have scrimped and saved; they have done what the Government so often preach and then denounce when it is practised. Those people have scrimped and saved for their old age. They have put money aside and have taken part in the saving economy. Those people will lose. Those are the people on whose behalf we have spoken during the past few weeks and whom we shall continue to defend until the Government realise that at the next general election they will pay the price for their penny pinching.

5.42 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The debate brings to a head the issues that have overshadowed Parliament since the general election last year. They are the issues of how best to care for the least well off in our increasingly prosperous society, and which party has the best policies to ensure that that care is provided.

The Government's record stands comparison with that of any previous Administration. We are spending more money in real terms on benefits for more people than ever before. The Government have had the courage and the capacity to take 40 years history of a welfare benefits system dominated by a bureaucracy which few people understood and which became increasingly discredited because of its inability to provide for those most in need, and to transform it into one which is fairer, more easily understood, more responsive and more likely to ensure full entitlement. It has provided increased benefits for more than 5 million of our most needy families, especially those with young children, and the disabled. That is what the social security reforms have achieved.

Far from being censured, the Government should be congratulated on their bold approach. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State deserves congratulations too on his announcement today, which is most welcome. Some may feel that it does not go far enough, but no one can doubt that it represents an urgent and sensitive response to the unforeseen difficulties which have been highlighted in different ways by hon. Members from both sides of the House.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Greenway: No. Many hon. Members wish to speak in this debate. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a point, he should wait to be called.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on a particular point?

Mr. Greenway: No. I am not giving way.

Today's announcement also demonstrates that the clear undertaking given to the House by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled on 13 April —just two weeks ago—to monitor carefully the impact of the reforms has been fully honoured.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I shall not give way. It would be unfair on hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate.

The real impact of recent events is clear. The Opposition have one policy—that is, to spend other people's money faster than the nation can ever hope to earn it. Day in, day out and week after week the House and the country are subjected to a nauseating catalogue of patronising promises which the Opposition and the nation know they will never be able to fulfil, in the increasingly unlikely event that they will ever get the chance to do so. I shudder to think what the cost to the country would be if all the promises that Opposition Members have made were honoured. Would they have been able to afford the modest increase announced today by my right hon. Friend? Their audacity in telling us how to spend the revenues and the wealth which their policies would destroy knows no bounds.

That despicable deception contrasts with the Government's proud achievements. In the past few weeks, 750,000 people on the lowest incomes have been taken out of tax. We have the lowest income tax rate for more than half a century. There has been the biggest ever increase in NHS budgets and £2 billion more has been spent on social security. We now have the highest ever social security budget. We are spending more on education, social services and fighting crime. Above all, a 15 per cent. pay rise for nurses has been fully funded by the Government without any cuts in other programmes.

Today's announcement that those at the margins who perhaps have lost out in a way which was not fully anticipated will be protected and is coupled with a further undertaking by the Secretary of State that the Government will continue to monitor the effects of these much needed reforms. No doubt that undertaking will be endorsed by the Minister of State.

Within a week there has been the biggest ever pay increase for nurses, more money for doctors and dentists and further concessions on social security benefits. All that shows that the Government have the compassion and the capacity to respond to the needs of society. People in this country trust us to do the right thing, and they know that their trust is well placed.

Perhaps the Government need to be nudged occasionally. I would say to Opposition Members that it is better to nudge the banker than to knock at the door of the bankrupt. I am not talking only about the money and the capacity to pay, but about the ideas and the radical approach of the Government and how that contrasts with the bankrupt ideas of the Opposition.

Those who doubt and have lingering concerns that the Government may have penalised too many, that more people than necessary may be losing benefit, should reflect that such concern and anxiety is clear evidence of the sea change in attitude towards Britain's prosperity in recent years. For too long people were willing to accept second best. How many times have we heard that it is all we can afford, that we have to tighten our belts? Even in the two or three years since the reforms were planned and announced, the growing evidence of increased prosperity has become more obvious. We must not shirk our responsibility to ensure that everyone in society shares in that prosperity. Despite my support for the Government tonight, I give my right hon. and hon. Friends notice that we must return to this matter in future because that is what the nation expects.

We must not be deflected from our objective of ensuring that the least well off, the sick and the disabled of the years ahead will be adequately supported and that, despite our increased wealth, we cannot afford the profligacy or recklessness that the Opposition would recommend. This motion stems not from the failure of this Government but from their success.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No.

The House should recognise that fact and reject the motion overwhelmingly.

5.49 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I welcome the opportunity to make a few observations about the housing benefit changes. I come from a region with the highest rate of unemployment in western Europe, with the highest level of dependency of any region under the authority of this Government, and with the greatest degree of social and environmental deprivation to be found anywhere in these islands.

Against that background, I shall single out a few specific points. The first was referred to by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). It relates to the crucial differences between the way in which housing benefit is administered in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom. I said earlier, somewhat facetiously, that one of the problems about the arrangements is that those who understand them cannot explain them, and that those who can explain them do not understand them. Those who work in the DHSS offices are under tremendous pressure. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the DHSS personnel. They have had a very short period within which to cope with the arrangements provided for in this enormously complex legislation, and this has caused enormous problems.

Those of us who have tried to give advice and help to people know, first, how difficult it is to claim benefit; secondly, how difficult it is to process the claim; and, thirdly, how difficult it is properly to assess the claim. That is already having an effect, and it will continue to have a long-term effect on housing benefit.

A new category of poor person has been created in recent years, and this is adding considerably to the problems. I am referring to those who are obviously in need or who have not made the effort that they should have made to provide for themselves and their families. They include those who, throughout their lives, have

worked hard, saved hard and looked after their families, their careers and their homes. They are being knocked by the housing benefit arrangements.

I shall call them, because I believe it to be a proper and accurate term, the lace-curtain poor, those who, all of a sudden, find that, despite the efforts that they have made throughout their lives, they cannot cope—a position in which they never envisaged they would find themselves.

Some of those who fall into the category of the lace-curtain poor are the elderly—people who put their pennies together and saved for the day when they might need that money, but who, when that day came, discovered that they were governed by a Government who said that their need was greater than that of the people from whom they were taking the money by reducing their housing benefit.

I am not referring just to the elderly. Younger people want to take pride in themselves and their families. For that reason they have saved, but now they are paying for it. I give as an example those who have been awarded industrial injuries pensions because of damage done to their persons. They are now losing housing benefit. It is not right that those in receipt of a pension of that kind, because of injuries they have suffered, should lose their housing benefit.

Another example is that of a lady who came to my surgery and told me that she was acting as a home help for three different people. She was playing an invaluable role in her local community, but because of her work she found that she was to lose £14·75. She said to me, "I have a choice. Either I can continue to act as a home help and lose that amount of money a week, which I simply cannot afford to lose, or I can decide no longer to act as a home help." Because of the decision that was forced upon her, three elderly people do not have the services of a very compassionate woman, of great humanity, who had served those old people so well. The social consequences affect not just those who lose housing benefit, but the rest of the community because of the domino effect.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled has an intimate knowledge of Northern Ireland affairs. For that reason, I shall refer to one particular problem. The Secretary of State for Social Services said that, as a concession, elderly people who have to be committed to care will have six months in which to sell their homes. The Minister knows, because of his long experience in Northern Ireland, that in many areas of Northern Ireland houses cannot be sold; they cannot even be given away. An enormous problem will be created for some of the worst hit areas of Northern Ireland unless the Secretary of State looks closely at that problem.

In the broader sense, this is a tremendously harsh approach to adopt towards elderly people. The six months is a sentence—not a sentence of death, but a sentence of dependency. Elderly people will have six months, after which they will be unable to return to the little home that they have created over 40 or 50 years. They will have to depend on others for however long they live. The elderly deserve better than that.

There is one issue that relates specifically to Northern Ireland. It concerns a person who owns a small area of land. I am not talking about huge spreads; I am talking about the six, eight, 10 or 12 acres of land, most of which is rough, that provides no income. Is that to be subject to capitalisation? It was subject to capitalisation for supplementary benefit purposes. Is that land to be capitalised and regarded as a source of income? If it is to be so regarded, the effects of the legislation will be even worse than I imagined.

I congratulate the Minister of State on thinking again about the threshold, and I commend him for responding, under pressure from his colleagues and others, to that point. I ask him, however, on the grounds of compassion and humanity, because of the deprivation that people will suffer, to think again and get rid of the iniquities and anomalies. The legislation will then be regarded as compassionate, not as something that cuts corners to the detriment of those who need the most help.

5.58 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) who speaks so movingly about his constituency. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, who I think missed the first few words of his speech, will read it carefully in *Hansard*.

I begin by thanking my right hon. Friend for his response. During the last three difficult weeks, a number of us have found ourselves on several occasions in the Opposition Lobby. I found myself appealing to my right hon. Friend on sight tests and dental charges. During the last fortnight I found myself appealing in vain to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. At least to some degree, I believe that this is third time lucky. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has responded promptly and properly not just to hon. Members, because we seek merely to articulate the concerns that people put to us, but to the deep need expressed and the real suffering that has been caused throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh referred to a new category of poor. I remember what was said in his speech on the Loyal Address by Sir John Nott when he was the Member for St. Ives. He said words to this effect: "The real poor of the 20th century are those without hope." Over the past few weeks, many people have felt deprived of hope.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his announcement. I hope that he will not think me churlish when I say that I do not think that he has gone far enough. I hope that he will still keep carefully under review the working of the new system. He will probably come to think—he is a sensitive man—that the £8,000 limit is not enough and that it should be £10,000. My right hon. Friend has also performed a signal service in recognising that that limit was not the be-all and end-all of the complaints and the sole creator of the suffering. I am glad to see him nod so vigorously in assent. Monitoring must be meticulous and continuous.

Mr. Gorst: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cormack: I shall not. I normally give way regularly, but I am under an injunction and have promised to speak briefly. There are hon. Friends who have sat throughout the debate, as my hon. Friend has not, who should have the chance to take part if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will monitor the new system carefully and continuously. I hope that he will recognise that, if there is a doubt, those

[Mr. Cormack]

people who have been writing to us and who have been deeply grieved and troubled over the past couple of weeks deserve the benefit of the doubt.

The complexities of the system which has been replaced have led to another complex system. We should be less than honest with ourselves if we did not acknowledge that not all of us realised the full impact of the changes.

One fact is underlined: the Department over which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State presides is too big. I do not say that in a spirit of criticism of my right hon. Friend or his colleagues. The time has come, as the troubles of the past fortnight graphically illustrate, for the two Departments—as they were once—to be separated. We need one Department to look after the National Health Service; we need another to look after the system of social services and security.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister began her career in the old Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, when there was a Ministry of Health as well. There is sometimes virtue, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has often demonstrated, in seeking to turn the clock back. I hope that, because of our troubles, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not be demoted. He certainly does not deserve that, but I hope that there will be a rethink of the machinery and system of government.

I end as I began, by thanking my right hon. Friend for his prompt, ready and sensitive response. It is a good beginning, and I trust that he will continue in the same vein.

6.3 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): No fewer than two weeks after the legislation was implemented, we have seen a climb-down. It will not do to talk of unforeseen circumstances. The consequences of the changes in housing benefit were foreseen many years ago. What was unforeseen was the political fallout from the pain and suffering caused by these changes. This illustrates the maxim that the Tory party never panics, except in a crisis.

There has been much talk by Conservative Members about "rough edges", "anomalies" and "fine tuning". We must stress that structural problems remain with the whole social security review. It will not do to talk about anomalies. Until the structural problems are seriously addressed, the fears of my constituents in Hackney will not be quelled.

I stress, although this point was made earlier, that the suffering caused by the housing benefit changes was not just a matter of capital and savings. There are 38,000 people in Hackney on housing benefit—most lost under the changes. Hardly any has capital. There is not a lot of capital accumulation in Hackney. Those people lost because of changes in how much they pay for their domestic rates, water rates and heating charges.

Furthermore, the Government's changes were virtually confiscatory of occupational pensions. An extraordinary number of pensioners came to see me, having scrimped and saved throughout their lives—sometimes until their 70s—only to find that, through these housing benefit changes, they would lose their occupational pensions at one stroke. I do not understand how it fits in with the alleged Tory philosophy of encouraging thrift and saving to introduce reforms which confiscate the occupational pensions of many thousands of pensioners.

In the light of the announcement by the Secretary of State, I feel obliged to ask the questions that Hackney and, above all, the manager of the local DHSS office will ask. If pensioners are to get back the money that they have lost since 1 April, when will the scheme start? Can they go to their DHSS office tomorrow, or will they have to wait for the forms to be printed? These people have to live on £26 a week. Their need is immediate. They will want to know just how quickly the scheme will come into operation.

Most of Hackney's local DHSS offices have terrible problems with staff shortages and delays in handling cases. They will want to know whether extra staff will be made available to handle this operation. If extra staff are not made available and people who try to get their money back just go behind the queue of those already waiting for responses to fresh and different claims, pensioners will not be helped in the foreseeable future.

It is all very well to come before the House and pull opportunistic rabbits out of hats. We want to know how the transitional arrangements will work. Will resources be made available to DHSS offices? When can people go to local offices to get their money? Above all, for how long will the transitional arrangements last? It is one thing to talk about transitional arrangements, but the positon of pensioners—it is largely pensioners who come to see me—is absolute. If the transition ends in a year, they will still be faced with problems.

A Mr. Fisher came to see me. He was originally on a pension of £41·37. Because of the housing benefit changes, he will have only £28 on which to live. If the transitional period lasts only a year, Mr. Fisher will still be reduced to having only £28 on which to live. In a year, this will be as relevant as it was when he asked me a week ago how the Minister suggests he should live on £28 a week.

There has been political sleight of hand in response to political panic. Hundreds of people face serious financial cuts. The one thing that Conservative Members have forgotten to say when talking about the "relative" poor and "targeting" is that the incomes of these people are tiny. It will not do for Conservative Members to talk about relatively well-off pensioners when these pensioners are living on incomes of £40 or £50 a week.

We have seen the Government' political conjuring; now they should tell us the facts. How will the transitional arrangements work? When will they come into operation? Is there any undertaking to review and extend them to preserve the living standards of some of the very poor people whom Labour Members represent?

6.8 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) for the first time. We understand why she is highly regarded as a constituency Member of Parliament.

Many of my constituents, not least pensioners, have contacted me about the benefit changes. In north-west Norfolk there is a growing number of elderly retired people. The vast majority of them accept the broad thrust of the social security changes because they understand the need for a simpler and more efficient system that cuts out some of the abuses, eradicates the unemployment trap,

and, above all, targets benefits more fairly. However, a fair number of them were a little surprised and bewildered and, in some cases, dismayed by the £6,000 capital limit.

Like many hon. Members, I have received representations which I have put to Ministers. I wholly welcome today's announcement. It is not fair to say, as some Opposition Members have said, that the Government have climbed down under the force of pressure, retreated and done a U-turn. The Government should be congratulated.

Mr. Gorst: My hon. Friend says that he wholly welcomes what the Government have done, but, if the Government make a blunder and change it into a mistake —if they get something 100 per cent. wrong and now have it only 15 per cent. wrong—how can my hon. Friend be wholly satisfied? Like him, I have received many representations from people. Where will those people obtain £2·50 that they never had before?

Mr. Bellingham: I do not regard what the Government did as a blunder. It was a mistake, and they have now corrected it and, above all, rendered the system far more acceptable.

The Government should not feel any shame about what they have done. They have shown that they are prepared to listen to representations, to consider individual cases and, above all, to come forward with remedies. I was particularly impressed by the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled on 13 April when he said that he would monitor the changes and consider every detail and the impact of the reforms over a prolonged period and be prepared to listen and be flexible. What the Government have done today is therefore extremely welcome.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bellingham: No, I shall not give way, as we are trying to make progress.

What has been the response of Opposition Members so far? They have derided the Government. Their constant tirades are wholly illogical. They have made endless attacks. They have not mentioned the Government's putting £2 billion more into social security this year. They have not mentioned the fact that, in cash terms, nine out of 10 people will be better off, or no worse off. They have not mentioned the fact that £1 in £3 of Government expenditure now goes towards social security, whereas, under the Labour Government, it was £1 in £4. They give no credit to the Government for the fact that, in 1978, £1·24 billion was spent on housing benefit, whereas, in the tax year 1987-88, £5·2 billion was spent on housing benefit.

Opposition Members must say what they would do, if their position is to be credible. Would they keep the old system, with all its abuses and anomalies? Do they believe that it is right that, as under the old system, a person with £30,000 capital should receive housing benefit? Do they believe that it is right for the abuses under the single payments scheme to continue? They do not tell us what they would do, particularly in respect of the ever-increasing cost of housing benefit.

We hear a great deal about immoral, un-Christian, uncaring and even wicked measures, but what is caring or Christian about keeping a system that is creaking at the seams and growing like Topsy, as the Minister of State said? What is caring or right about keeping a system that discriminates against low-paid people in work, discourages thousands of others from finding work and has a built-in unemployment trap? The system is discredited, yet the Opposition want to keep it going. There is no answer to those points because the Opposition's position is wholly illogical. Surely the caring, correct and sensible way forward is to try to target benefits at those who need them most.

I had a conversation about housing benefit with some constituents over the weekend. They said that it would probably make sense if one house in five were to receive housing benefit, but not if one in three were to receive it. We must set the limit somewhere. We must ask ourselves whether it is right to ask low-paid people, through their taxes, to help those with substantial savings.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bellingham: No, I shall not give way. We must make progress.

The figure decided upon by the Government, following representations, is right. As the Minister said recently, nothing is cast in stone. Those figures can change. The system is now far more effective and changes can and will be made in the future, as and when the need is shown to exist. The Government will act flexibly.

There is nothing caring about building up excessive dependence on the state and creating a culture which encourages people to turn to the state in the first resort as a matter of course. The Opposition do not have answers. Opposition Members churn out individual cases by the dozen, but we have heard nothing about those pensioners with £3,000 of savings who will receive more housing benefit or about other cases where people will be considerably better off.

The Minister will be interested to know that I had a telephone call over the weekend from a Labour councillor. I shall read out the message because it was not edited by me. It states that the councillor

"would be most grateful if you could call him. He sounded very nice by the way. He stressed that politically you are not in agreement. Just wanted you to know that he has heard from the grass roots how well the new benefit system is working. He knows of one family who were getting 50p or 60p under FIS, who were really poor, who are now getting £20 a week. He knows of another person who is now getting £60 a week and not £20 as before."

We hear only of those cases where people are much worse off. The Government have said that they will consider them with compassion and flexibility. The old system was seriously discredited. No Government could have stood back and done nothing, particularly a reforming Government elected on a mandate to encourage enterprise initiative and self-help.

However, there is a need for a comprehensive safety net below which nobody can fall. We must bear in mind that any social security system or comprehensive safety net is based, above all else, on the productive wealth of a country. If there is no productive base and wealth creation is stifled by a system that is growing out of all proportion, the wealth-creating system will be jeopardised and the poorest people will suffer most. That is precisely what was happening. The increases were uncontrollable. The system is now far more effective. By the time we have sorted out the details, it will be fairer and, after what the Government

[Mr. Bellingham]

have done today, much more acceptable. I shall certainly support the Government's amendment tonight, and I urge my colleagues to do likewise.

6.9 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): This afternoon, we have been treated to a wonderful spectacle on Conservative Benches. One minute, in their prepared speeches from Central Office, Conservative Members told us that the last Labour Government threw cash around like it was going out of fashion and that they did not direct money in any way. The next minute, the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) told us that the last Labour Government were too mean. Yet, in 1979 and since, the Conservative Government have based their policies against the Labour party and the electorate—those who are on benefit—on saying that those on benefit should not get more than those doing the lowest paid job in society. Everybody remembers——

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Ms. Primarolo: I shall not give way. I have 10 minutes in which to speak. Many hon. Members have contributed to the debate, and I wish to press on.

We well remember the long posters stating: "Labour isn't working". The Conservative party forced up benefits to make sure that people voted at any price. I wonder whether the Government misled the electorate then, or do they seek to mislead the electorate today?

Let us be clear about housing benefit. It does not stand in isolation. I was a member of the Standing Committees that examined the social security and housing legislation and considered the relationship between various benefits. In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), the Minister for Housing and Planning pointed out six times—he even chastised us—that there would be no reduction in housing benefit and that it would be the main tool for protecting tenants when the Housing Bill becomes law. Because of the changes that have been made, tenants now have no protection.

Having taken away £670 million, the Government give back £100 million today, and expect us to say, "Don't worry, everything is hunky-dory." Having once claimed to simplify it, they make announcements that will make the system more complex, and then expect us to congratulate them. They made the changes because of Opposition Members' work on exposing their policies, and then they expect us to congratulate them. We shall not do that. It is not enough. The Government must do more. On Second Reading and in Committee, Conservative Members said that housing benefit would be the major form of protection for tenants in the private sector. It will not.

I draw the attention of the House to a couple of cases, the principles of which are not dealt with by the amendments. The first involves a single parent who has one child. Following the ethics that the Government preach to her, she works part-time. As a result of the changes, she is £5·27 a week worse off. The reason is that, in the the family credit that she now receives, there is an adjustment of £2·50 to pay for the free school dinners that she has lost. Free school dinners cost £4 a week, and her compensation was only £2·50. We shall overlook that point for a moment. That £2·50 was counted as unearned income, and she lost £5·27 housing benefit. That is not dealt with by the amendments, and that person is still losing.

The second case involves a private tenant, a disabled woman who is separated from her husband. She works part-time and receives £38 per week. She also receives £12 from her ex-husband. Until the changes, she was paying £9·10 a fortnight for her rent and rates. She must now pay an additional sum of £18 a fortnight, as a direct result of the changes in housing benefit. One day she was entitled to benefit, and the next day she was £18 a week worse off. She is not helped by the changes. Indeed, when the Housing Bill comes into force, as a private tenant, her position will deteriorate. She has not had a holiday for five years. She asked me to tell the Health Ministers that she does not smoke or drink, but she doubts whether, as a result of the changes, she will be able to exist in future.

The Minister should explain exactly what we should say to people about how they are to manage on the miserly sums that the Government are allowing them to live on. How can we explain to them that, after the Budget, some people are thousands of pounds a month better off, yet the Government are taking from them some basic amounts?

Another woman wrote to me. She is an owner-occupier. She is an old-age pensioner, 66 years old—the model of Tory ideology in terms of saving money all her life. She receives a pension of £27·72 and a payment from her ex-husband, which give her an income of £42·21 a week. Because of rates, she loses under the 20 per cent. reduction. She described her lifestyle. She has worked all her life. Her generation's contribution has been mentioned. She has one coal fire in her house. She saves all the year round to buy coal. She lights that one fire one afternoon a week—on Sunday, when she has visitors. She has meat once a week. Every other day, she eats a baked potato, an apple and some cheese.

It is disgusting that Conservative Members should subject people to that type of lifestyle and then preach on about what the Labour Government did in 1979. We are talking about now. That lady wraps herself in blankets with hot water bottles and goes to bed at 8 o'clock every night throughout the winter, and stays up only in the summer when it is warm enough to do so. Her only luxury is a cat.

Those people are not helped by the amendments. It is clear that the changes in the social security system will lead to massive hardship. To Conservative Members and to many Opposition Members it may seem only a small amount of money compared with the salaries that we receive, but to people who are trying to live on £20, £30 and £40 a week, it means the difference between being able to eat and being able to keep warm.

I have some questions for the Minister. The six months grace for selling a home will apply to housing benefit, but will it apply to income support? Obviously, in the cases that the Leader of the Opposition has highlighted, it has been a real problem. The transitional protections under the income support regulations will be cut every time a person's circumstances change. Will that happen to housing benefit too? How many people do the Government expect still to get protection in 12 months? About 5·5 million people suffered loss as a result of the changes in the regulations.

Today, with the changes that the Government have announced, 400,000 people will not be quite so badly off. What about the other 5 million? When will the

Government do something instead of giving us platitudes and figures about what they are spending and realise that, for many complex reasons, the reality—what is going on in people's lives—is not reflected in the Government's figures. It is about time that the Government did something about it.

6.29 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This is, unquestionably, a watershed debate. *[Interruption.]* It is beginning to dawn on Conservative Members—clearly not those giggling below the Gangway—what their Government have been up to.

Over the past three years—you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can testify to this as you have frequently been in the Chair on these occasions—we have described over and over again exactly the same problems about which we have heard today. Conservative Members, with a few honourable exceptions, have behaved like the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) did a few moments ago; they have jeered, sneered or completely ignored our predictions. To be fair, I can understand that they could not believe what was about to happen, even though it was predicted not only by us but by every other independent group or commentator. It is true that we were not 100 per cent. accurate, and perhaps we should apologise for that, although we were more accurate than the Government. We erred on the side of generosity.

Until two weeks ago, the Government dismissed all our figures as hypothetical, misleading and exaggerated. What we have heard over the past few days makes it clear that the losses in housing benefit, as the Government initially intended it to be imposed, were worse than those hypothetical figures.

As Conservative Members are perhaps beginning to listen to the case being put by the Labour party, I shall make two points. First, we should look, in the context of this debate, at the basis of the Government's argument —which was parroted by Conservative Members—about why they should make savings in housing benefit—savings from which today we have forced them so spectacularly and abruptly to begin to retreat.

Again today, the argument was advanced that housing benefit must need cutting because it goes to one household in three and because the budget has risen since 1979. I recommend that Conservative Members who parroted those arguments read not only the briefings that they get from the Whips Office or Central Office but the 1985 or 1988 report of the Government's Social Security Advisory Committee. In both those reports, they will find admirably set out the reason for increased expenditure on housing benefit—the increase in housing costs. Those costs are higher now than in 1979 or 1982, when the Government introduced the housing benefit scheme, which the Secretary of State comprehensively denounced this afternoon as unfair, complicated and dreadful.

As some Conservative Members were not paying as much attention as they should have been when the Secretary of State referred scathingly to the Opposition having done nothing about the scheme, I shall repeat that it was this Government's scheme, which they introduced in 1982, that the Secretary of State was criticising. Although he criticised the Opposition for not dealing with the worst aspects of the poverty trap in the preceding scheme, his criticisms of the poverty trap that preceded this scheme were criticisms of his Government, not ours.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: I am sorry, but I am short of time. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman only if I have enough time.

This is not the Government's first attempt to evade the consequences of the net effect of housing benefit changes. The hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) saved me time by listing a substantial number of the cuts that the Government have made and mentioning the millions of people whom they have excluded or who have lost help with housing benefit in recent years.

Cumulative savings of £366 million were made between 1983 and 1987, before the £650 million-worth of savings that the Government had planned to make this year. During that same period, despite the cuts in spending on housing benefits, which rose to £5,000 million, the subsidy in housing costs, which helps to keep rents down, has been cut by a cumulative total of £5,000 million, in real terms at 1987-88 prices. That cut led to the 155 per cent. increase in average local authority rents, which has so contributed to the numbers of people who need and draw housing benefit. That is only the cut in average local authority rents: there have also been cuts in rate support grant, which have led to increases in rates, and again the need for housing benefit to be increased.

Conservative Members do not realise that help with housing benefit is a smaller proportion of the rent and rates bill for every individual who receives that help than it was in 1979, 1982 or 1983. That help is not only a smaller proportion of housing costs but is lost at lower incomes —far below average earnings for those with average rent and rates. Before April 1983, a single pensioner would have lost entitlement to housing benefit at a weekly income of £94·35p. From April this year, such a person loses entitlement to housing benefit at a weekly income of £64·51. That is a cash cut of £30, never mind what it is in real terms. The argument that the housing benefit scheme is over-generous falls apart if one troubles to scrutinise the facts.

We have been calling for the concessions that have been announced today in the capital limit and on the transitional arrangements. It is a pity—it would have saved many people much anguish and heartache—that the Government were unable to announce any concessions in transitional arrangements over the past three years, as they did in 1982. It is a pity that they had to make it so crystal clear that they were determined to make these cuts if they could possibly get away with it.

It is a pity that, because only concessions in transitional protection have been offered, the losses that have been described still occur—although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) said, they will be more gradual. It is a pity that the savage tapers and rule changes, which have caused losses to over 5 million people, will remain wholly untouched and will bite unamended on new claimants or those who give up benefit for a period but return at the new levels.

It is a pity that the marginal rate of tax—85p in the pound for those who claim housing benefit—begins to apply at incomes just over £3,500 a year for a couple. Government Back Benchers have described the benefits

[Mrs. Beckett]

scheme as over-generous, yet a month ago in the Budget the Chancellor said that the highest rate of marginal tax applied to the most wealthy should be 40p in the pound.

It is a pity that, despite the transitional protection that has been announced today, people will still face rent rises of up to £7 or £8 a week. Conservative Members have not noticed that, although the Secretary of State is saying that losses above £2·50 will be made good, he is also saying that that will be based on last year's rent and rates, not this year's. An initial calculation that I have received from Edinburgh shows that people will lose between £5·50 and £8 a week before any help will be given. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) at least has appreciated that point.

It is a pity that two people in identical circumstances will receive rebates that differ by £10 a week or more, depending on whether they claim before or after 1 April, because new claimants do not get transitional protection.

It is certainly a pity that not only is there an incredibly complex system for claiming that concession—which will certainly cause headaches for local authorities and will have to be operated by claimants—but it appears that the childless, the young, and childless widows who are not pensioners will be excluded even from the help that is being offered.

That is the major case that I want to make about the concessions, the nature of the Government's scheme and what they are offering. My second point concerns the restricted nature of this debate. Now that Government Back Benchers have been forced to accept that the Labour party understands and accurately describes the effects of the changes that the Government are making, perhaps they will listen not only to us but to others who dispute the Government's claim about housing benefit and the rest of the changes that the Government are making.

I shall quote from a letter dated 26 April sent by the Royal National Institute for the Blind to the Secretary of State. It states:

"Over the past two years we have repeatedly put to you and your officials cases illustrating the levels of loss which disabled people would face . . . We have refuted the Government's claim that only 80,000 'Sick and disabled people' will be worse off."

That refers not to the housing benefit changes, but to some small part of the other changes that the Government will pass.

Mr. Jacques Arnold *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: I shall give way later, if I can.

Today's debate barely deals with the tip of the iceberg of the Government's changes. It is not even the case that all the losses on housing benefit are yet apparent. My local authority is having problems with the computer software, although I understand from it and the company involved that mine is substantially ahead of many other local authorities. Many local authorities have not been able to inform their electorate of the scale of losses that the electorate is likely to face.

Apart from not knowing all the losses even on housing benefit, there are the losses on other rule changes; the losses when people lose transitional protection on income support; the impact when those who have transitional protection get increased bills but no increased income to meet them; and the impact when the desperate are not only turned away after applying for help with essential items from the social fund, but told that they cannot even re-apply for six months. More than all that, there is the devastating impact of the gap that new claimants will find between their needs and their income.

On Monday my local social security office gave me the example of someone diagnosed as near to the date of their death. Sadly, that does occur. Under the old system, the office could have visited and given every kind of additional allowance and help it could lay its hands on. Now, such a patient cannot be offered anything except, if they are lucky, a crisis loan. If such a person lives long enough to qualify for an attendance allowance, that is six months, he may be able to get some help. If all the generous help from the Government to protect the severely disabled is heavily linked to benefits such as the attendance allowance, for which one must be seriously ill for six months to qualify, those families will suffer not only bereavement but a death debt with it. All that is still to come.

Clearly, a few Conservative Members understand that. The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) spoke in deep and almost impenetrable code, but I think he told his Ministers that this was not the last but only the first climbdown that they would have to make. The hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) showed remarkable perspicacity when he said to his Front Bench colleagues:

"I do not believe that the Bill will stand the test of time."
—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1986; Vol. 98, c. 269.]

I doubt whether even the hon. Gentleman thought that the measure would not last three weeks.

We know that some Conservative Members are considering how they will vote tonight. When they make that judgment, they should remember that that is just the start of the relevation of the damage which their Government are doing. I can understand that people find it difficult to believe in the nature and scale of the losses that we have consistently identified. A reason must be that they could not understand why even this Government should take such a political risk.

Incidentally, on 12 April the Chief Secretary said that Ministers had no plans to bow to the rising tide of criticism by tinkering with the regulations, but we shall pass over that. He also said:

"At the heart of the reform is the ending of the discrimination between low income people in work and those not in work on benefit."

The Chief Secretary put his finger on the essential point: this is part of the Government's attack on trade union rights, part of the promotion of a low wage economy—benefits must be even lower than wages—and part of their attack on the principle of the welfare state.

The Chief Secretary's words echoed those of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law in 1832:

"the situation of the individual relieved should not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class."

The Government are at one with the Poor Law Commission.

Mr. Jacques Arnold *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mrs. Beckett: I am sorry, but I have only about one minute.

This is part two of the attack on the principles of the welfare state: the principle of universality and the principle

of an emphasis on rights, not charity. Lest any hon. Members on Conservative Benches or on ours doubt the direction in which the Government are going, I refer them to an article by Professor Minford in *The Daily Telegraph* on 25 April:

"It is the existence of income support at all for pensioners that is the disincentive to save."

The view of those who advise this Government is that the changes do not go far enough; it is just a step along the road towards demolishing the welfare state.

Clearly, it has come as an unpleasant shock to the Government that even Tory voters have been undermined by 50 years of promotion of Socialist ideas, as the Secretary of State for the Environment said the other day, to believe that they should have rights and dignities, and should not be ashamed of claiming benefits for which they have contributed. The fact that they believe that has forced the Government to back down today on this minor aspect of the changes. Tory Back Benchers threatened to vote with the Labour party. The only way in which the Government will back down from the overwhelming damage that they intend to pensioners, the sick, the disabled and the unemployed is if those who have the opportunity, particularly at the local elections on 5 May, show, by voting resoundingly for the Labour party, that they reject the Government's philosophy and principles which cost the elderly and disabled so dear.

6.45 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I understand the need of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), in her peroration, to accuse the Government of every possible attack on the elderly, the sick and the poor that she can find in her catechism, but her criticisms sit ill with the Government's record on social security since we came to office in 1979. I cannot see how her criticisms, or the surprising attack on the Government from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), characterising the changes as an attack by the rich on the living standards of the poor, sit with the steady and consistent increase in both the scope and extent of social security under this Government.

Today we are spending 40 per cent. more in real terms on benefit than the Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* We are spending nearly £1 billion a week on social security benefits. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady was heard in silence. It is only fair that the Minister should have a hearing.

Mr. Scott: Every working taxpayer is contributing £40 a week towards social security. We are helping more than 6 million people with rent, rates, or both. The criticism that the Government's record on the disabled does not stand up to scrutiny is particularly offensive. Spending on the disabled has risen by no less than 80 per cent. in real terms under this Government—over £3 billion in real terms. Those criticisms do not stand up. I rebut them only because the hon. Lady made them. This debate covers narrower ground, because we are discussing an Opposition motion on housing benefit and the Government's amendment to it.

I am glad to reply to this debate on the proposals that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State put to the House this afternoon. His response showed clearly the Government's determination to fulfil the pledge that we gave previously, that, as we implement these reforms, we shall listen carefully and be responsive to criticisms—*[Interruption.]* I cannot conceive how Opposition Members can characterise this as a climbdown or a U-turn. We are spending £5·2 billion on housing benefit and we are today making a modest adjustment of £100 million to respond to criticisms by my hon. Friends and some Labour Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) put it exactly right. It is the duty of the Government to listen, to be responsive to and to use good judgment about criticisms. The Government have done that without any of the arrogance that we too often saw from Labour Members when they were on these Benches.

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) asked for a specific continuing commitment that we shall continue to monitor the impact of these changes as the years go by. I suggest that the fact that we have had this debate, and the announcement by my right hon. Friend earlier, will arouse considerable interest among the public. We will be making an early announcement about the steps that people should take to avail themselves of the transitional protection that we have announced today. We hope to make an announcement within the next few days on cases of exceptional hardship. I hope that hon. Members of all parties will draw these matters to the attention of anyone who may be able to benefit from the transitional protection.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) accused us of abandoning the simplicity of the existing system. That is not true. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, the structure is substantially the same as it was. We are being responsive to a pair of problems which have presented themselves where we believe early action is necessary.

I also reinforce the point, which I think the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye made, that the transitional protection is nothing to do with our local offices. It will be administered centrally by a special unit, although we will need the support and co-operation of local authorities in filtering the applications as they come through.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead asked two or three questions, apart from his general attack on the Government, and I should like to respond to those. He asked whether all those on housing benefit supplement will be covered by the transitional protection. The answer to his question is that they will be covered if they fall within the categories outlined by my right hon. Friend in his opening remarks. Pensioners, sick and disabled people, and families with children will be covered if they suffer as a result of the ending of housing benefit supplement.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead also asked—this point has been raised by other hon. Members—why we chose the figure of £2·50. First, it is worth reminding ourselves that we are talking not about people on income support, but people who are above income support level. Further, we had to balance the cost of administering any new scheme of transitional protection against the benefits which would ensue. Again, it was a matter of judgment which led us to choose £2·50 as a reasonable way of protecting those with high losses over a transitional period.

[Mr. Scott]

My hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), the hon. Member for Birkenhead and other hon. Members asked what will happen to transitional payments in the course of time: will they be treated in the same way as other transitional arrangements or finish after a single year? They will be treated in the same way as transitional arrangements in other circumstances. Increases in benefits will erode the provision necessary under transitional protection. After one year, fewer people will need that transitional protection; after two years even fewer people will need it; and eventually the need for it will disappear. I recognise that appropriate help may have to be given over an extended period to some of those people for whom we have announced that protection will be available.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) raised a number of points. First, he mentioned the deprivation in Northern Ireland, with which both he and I are familiar. We know who is largely responsible for deprivation in that part of the United Kingdom. The administration of the transitional protection in Northern Ireland has still to be decided—for example, whether it will be done by the central unit of the DHSS on this side of the water or the DHSS in Northern Ireland. It may be that the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland will be the more appropriate body for handling that matter. As we are handling it centrally for Great Britain, it may be sensible to cover Northern Ireland on the same basis. We shall make a final decision on that later.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh also asked about small amounts of land which may be held in Northern Ireland. The situation there is that if the land is worked, the income generated from it will be taken into account. If it is not worked, the capital value will be taken into account. If it is virtually worthless, it will be totally ignored and treated as such. He also said that houses in Northern Ireland are difficult to sell because of the particular circumstances in the Province. In that event, the six-month rule is capable of being extended.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Scott: No, I shall not give way.

What I have shown today is that the changes that my right hon. Friend announced were intended to ease two important situations, where the shoe was pinching as a result of the introduction of the benefits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) starkly contrasted the records of the Conservative and Labour Governments in these matters. Let us look at housing benefit and contrast the Labour record with that of the Conservative Government.*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Scott: I know that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was not a member of that Labour Government, but it is about time that he listened to some of the facts. The total expenditure on housing support, which is rent and allowances, in 1974-75 was £701 million —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must not shout each other down in this House.

Mr. Scott: I know that Opposition Members do not like the facts, but they should try to listen to them.

Hon. Members: Tell the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Scott: In real terms, the Labour Government's £1·23 billion in 1978-79 represented not an increase, but a reduction of 2 per cent. in expenditure on housing support. The Conservative Government's record shows an increase of 107 per cent. in real terms over the period of—*[Interruption.]* Indeed, the Member for Derby, South suggested in her reply to the debate— she quoted the Social Security Advisory Committee in support of this—that it is not the RPI that should be taken into account, but the increase in housing costs. However, if we take rent levels as a measure, the Labour Government managed an increase of only 2 to 3 per cent. in real terms during their period of office.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order and not a point of argument.

Mr. Allen: Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is an Opposition Supply day. Therefore, is not the Minister under some obligation to respond to the debate?

Mr. Speaker: . I have been here since the Minister rose, and he has been doing just that.

Mr. Scott: The 2 to 3 per cent. increase in real terms during the term of the Labour Government contrasts with the increase of over 50 per cent. in real terms under this Government. The fact is that the Labour party failed when it was in office, and it is failing again. We have provided the resources for housing support—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Scott: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Scott: The fact is—and the hon. Member for Livingston knows it—that the Labour Government failed to generate the wealth to provide for their social security spending. Does he remember the Labour Government's approach to social security spending? I shall remind him of what Joel Barnett said about the Labour Government. He stated:

"It might be said that the first few months . . . were characterised by our spending more which in the event we did not have."

Where did that lead? It led to the IMF, cuts in social security and the inability of the Labour Government to fulfil the high-flown promises that they presented to the electorate. They will fail again, given half the chance.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: No.

Of course I recognise, in the words of the late Iain Macleod, that money is the root of all progress. However, one has to generate that wealth in the first place. Only then can one spend it. This Government have done just that.

Mr. Speaker: The original Question was the motion on the effects of the new housing benefit changes in the name of the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Tony Banks: It is not 7 o'clock yet.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 324.

Division No. 278] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCusker, Harold
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon

Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 220.

Division No. 278] **[7.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*

Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham N'd)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*

Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCusker, Harold
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malion, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House, recognising that social security spending has risen by nearly 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979, and now totals almost £48½ billion, and that spending on housing benefit last year amounted to over £5 billion and went to over 7 million, or 1 in 3, households in this country, commends Her Majesty's Government for its determination to tackle the complexities and unfairnesses of the old system.

British Railways (No. 2) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [15 March].

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

7.24 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to continue the debate that was unfortunately curtailed on 15 March. On that occasion I made some side remarks about the former Great Northern railway that went up to Bradford.

On this occasion I should like to concentrate upon the fact that a number of the new works listed in the Bill are interesting because, on several occasions, the track beds are former railways, which are now to be restored to use. That is welcome, but it would have been more helpful if the British Railways Board had been more cautious about closing those tracks in the first place. It would also have been helpful if the Government had not financially pressed the British Railways Board so that it had to look for other means of obtaining revenue, even if that meant closing the railways that it was supposed to run. The Bill illustrates that failing, because several of the private works will utilise existing track beds. Indeed, some of the compulsory purchase items relate to track that must be bought back from the owners to whom the British Railways Board sold the track beds.

The preservation of railway rights of way by the British Railways Board and other public bodies, such as local authorities, is important because many of us, especially Opposition Members, have argued that use of the railways will increase—we have made that argument for the past 20 years. There has been an increase in passenger usage. In the past 25 years we have argued against many of the closures; we said that the majority were mistaken and foolish and were helping to erode the national network. In a minor way, the Bill reflects the truth of those statements.

I wish to consider clause 18, which deals with a level crossing in the parish of Steeton with Eastburn. The Bill gives the British Railways Board powers to close that crossing once a road bridge has been constructed

"by the Secretary of State in connection with the Kildwick to Beechcliffe section of the improvement of the Airedale Trunk Road."

The closure of the level crossing at Steeton will save the board between £30,000 and £40,000 a year in terms of operational costs, repairs and maintenance. What will be done with that money? The board will not have to spend that money to provide any alternative level crossing facility because a road bridge will be constructed by the Department of Transport. Presumably no cost will be borne by the board, so the board will have a net saving of quite a considerable sum.

I hope that the money will be used on the railway because Steeton—it formerly had a station—is on the line that runs from Leeds to Carlisle. I suggest to the promoters of the Bill that when the board can obtain savings, it should use every possible opportunity to put that money towards helping to maintain the Settle-Carlisle railway. The level crossing is on the route of that railway, which was constructed to give the Midland railway, running north from Leeds, access to Scotland. It is germane to the argument that the money saved on the level crossing should be invested in the Settle-Carlisle railway.

The £30,000 to £40,000 which will be saved on Steeton crossing would be over and above the £500,000 which the local authorities have offered to help restore Ribblehead viaduct. As the House will no doubt remember, the Minister for Public Transport is mulling over the local authorities' proposal. In reply to a written question today, the Minister said:

"The local authorities have offered £500,000 towards the capital costs of restoring Ribblehead Viaduct subject to the following conditions:

a. that British Rail continue to maintain and operate the line;

b. that the line's future be guaranteed for a period of at least 20 years;

c. that the contributions are a 'one-off' which should not be seen as setting any precedent and no further requests for financial support should be made."

If, through the legislation, British Rail can make a saving, naturally the qualification about the one-off contribution from the local authorities would be more practicable. The answer continued:

"d. that the revenue support contributions already agreed for the next two years will not be extended beyond that period."

The Minister may make a statement shortly about the retention of the Settle-Carlisle line. That magnificent and beautiful railway runs from Settle junction and is connected to the main network on the very line with which the Bill deals. I hope that the Minister will announce shortly, if not tonight, that the Settle-Carlisle line is to be preserved and used for visitors and people who live in the Yorkshire dales. Thousands of people are waiting with bated breath for that announcement.

The local authorities have been blackmailed into accepting the position, because the Minister wanted to put the odium of closure on the local authorities rather than take it on his own shoulders. The local authorities have come up with a significant amount of money. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will use this opportunity to say that the line has been saved.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I support the hon. Gentleman's feelings about the Settle-Carlisle line. As the line cannot be justified in purely transport terms, as I think many would agree, although it is justified on the wider view, is it not right that the local authorities should make a contribution, bearing in mind that some of the benefits which would flow from the retention of the line are benefits which local authorities exist to promote?

Mr. Cryer: I do not want to digress too much from the Bill, but this legislation is a possible source of revenue to help the Settle-Carlisle line. If the hon. Gentleman compares the cost of the Aire valley trunk road with the modest cost of maintaining this line, he will see that the road user is getting enormous investment compared with the railway user. I do not agree with him that the railway is not justified on transport and economic grounds. After all, it is a section of British Rail in which income equals expenditure. As the hon. Gentleman will know, when British Rail announced the closure of the Settle-Carlisle line, it was embarrassed by a breakdown on the west coast route which forced it to divert all traffic to the Settle-Carlisle line. It is an important diversionary route. The efforts of British Rail to divert freight traffic from the route, in a feeble and misjudged attempt to prove that it was not a part of the national network, came to naught.

The line has potential and this legislation would provide additional revenue which British Rail, with the

[Mr. Cryer]

approval of the Minister, could divert to it. The section of railway which we are talking about is supported to some extent by the local passenger transport authority.

When Steeton level crossing is closed, there will be much redundant equipment. Some of it will be in good working order and it could be transferred to a line like the Settle-Carlisle line, which is not the crack inter-city route it used to be when it was part of the midland main line to Scotland. I hope that British Rail will consider using that equipment to keep the Settle-Carlisle line going rather than break it up and throw it to one side. The House often forgets that there are many ways of keeping railways running. One is using redundant materials from elsewhere. If the BRB had the will, it could do that to help this magnificent railway.

Clause 19(3), which refers to a new level crossing, says:

"The Board may, subject to such requirements as the Secretary of State may from time to time lay down, provide, maintain and operate at or near the new level crossing such barriers, lights, traffic signs and automatic or other devices and appliances as may be approved by the Secretary of State."

No doubt the Minister supports the legislation, as we all do, because it means an improved railway network. Nonetheless, the safest level crossings are those with interlinking electronic or mechanical devices between the closing of a barrier or a gate and signals for the passage of trains.

I draw this to the Minister's attention because the Department of Transport over the past quarter century has allowed the standard of operation at the level crossings to deteriorate. It has removed employees in the interests of "economy" and "efficiency", which means that there have been accidents. I have operated an interlinking system, which is insisted on by the Department of Transport on the Worth valley railway. It is perfectly proper. There are two level crossings on the line, which operate with interlocking signals. I urge the Minister to keep this under careful review to ensure high standards of safety.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): When accidents happen, does the hon. Gentleman not agree that it is not due to the lack of employees but to the lack of gates? There seems to be a policy of removing level crossing gates and merely having crossings operated by flashing traffic signals, with the result that on occasions motorists attempt to jump the lights. That is when accidents happen.

Mr. Cryer: I was being, as usual, a modest, cautious observer of the passing scene. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that the removal of gates has caused difficulties. Foolish motorists can manoeuvre around the single pole barriers. Sometimes there are no barriers or just a pole, or a pole with a falling fence attached to it. It is a retrogate step. Over many years we have established a high standard of railway safety, which is zealously supported by railway employees.

Financial constraints imposed by the Government have led to pressure on BRB to get rid of employees, which results in a lowering of safety standards. Many stations are no longer manned. With signal boxes covering ever longer route mileages, the signalman cannot keep as good an eye on security. Vandalism on British railways nationally costs about £20 million a year. It is foolish to have to repair faults arising from vandalism when, by employing more people, British Rail could obviate it. Indeed, it is worth pointing out to the Minister that the BRB threatened to sack some members of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen who, two days before the fire at King's Cross, were distributing leaflets pointing out that there were dangers in the operation of King's Cross and other underground stations.

The increasingly rigid attitude of British Rail management in that respect is counter-productive, and disheartening for members of ASLEF and the NUR, who do a good job and give excellent service. Those works cannot be carried out effectively if the management is not prepared to co-operate with the trade unions. It has been put to me by members who have spent 30, 40 or 50 years working on the railways that they have never known such an autocratic and rigid attitude.

That attitude is induced and engendered by the Government. The best way of working is always by co-operation rather than confrontation. The rail trade unions have never sought otherwise, and management should not try to insist on confrontation, as they have so often done—most recently at King's Cross. I am told that there are difficulties also at Leeds, which is one of the biggest depots in the country.

Mr. Waller: The hon. Gentleman's link between safety and manpower is not born out by the facts. At the time when the predecessors of British Rail employed three or four times the number of people it does today, railway accidents took the lives of several hundred people every year.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): When was that?

Mr. Waller: Rail is now one of the safest forms of transport, yet the relationship with the number of people using the railways is more aligned to the number of staff reductions. The link between manpower and safety cannot be drawn in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) has got his statistics wholly wrong. I cannot recall one year in the operation of the railways when hundreds of people were killed. Today, the number of mortalities can be counted on the fingers of two hands, at most. Those killed are usually not passengers but railwaymen working on the line without adequate safety precautions.

The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) said that, without barriers, new dangers are created at railway crossings, and there have been a number of horrific accidents. The installation of automatic crossings, with or without barriers, is due to the removal of level crossing keepers in order to cut operating costs. At the same time, reasonable levels of safety must be maintained. British Rail operates trains carrying staff who try to catch those who trespass or throw things on to the railway line.

That is done, at considerable cost, because over many miles of track there are not enough railwaymen working —either as a matter of routine or because signal boxes have closed. Maintenance is now undertaken by machinery or by roving gangs instead. Many stations are left unmanned or have closed. For all those reasons, the railway tends to be more vulnerable.

My hon. Friend on the Front Bench, the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) worked on the railways

all his life before coming to the House and he is nodding his head in agreement. The new works set out in the British Railways (No. 2) Bill——

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: I will, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish this sentence.

Those proposed works will be improved if the management is prepared to take a positive attitude towards the trade unions. I have found over many years that railwaymen in particular are devoted to the system they serve and want to do a good job.

Sir John Farr: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but is it not true that the work traditionally undertaken by gang men can now be undertaken by machines? Provided that innovation is adopted with safety, no human life will then be at risk. Ten years ago, say, such maintenance was the cause of unfortunate accidents.

Mr. Cryer: As I remember it, the Hither Green disaster was caused by a cracked rail that was subject to mechanical inspection. Although we may denigrate ourselves as human beings from time to time, if we give some devotion to our work, we are all better off for it. The Hither Green disaster was an example of a lack of human inspection leading to a serious track failure. I believe that there can be both types of inspection.

I do not object to the improvements set out in the Bill. The jobs need to be made easier, and perhaps that will result in the work being performed better. At the same time, we should not get rid of people purely from an accounting point of view. If we do so, we may live to regret it. Some would argue that the King's Cross disaster could be blamed on a diminution in the number of staff there and a lack of concern for safety as a result of management seeking to reduce the number of staff.

Mr. Snape: Will my hon. Friend go further and say that, in the recently published report on the 1986 disaster at Colwich junction, when, tragically, one railwayman was killed—albeit no passengers were injured—the Department of Transport's own inspector pointed to the lack of footplate inspection staff as a reason why the driver of one of the trains involved made the mistake he did? That inspection starkly illustrated the dangers of withdrawing staff for the sake of saving money and the likely consequences of such an economy in terms of safety.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; he has considerable knowledge of railway matters and follows these issues closely. He will recall, as I do, that, in the early 1980s, railway inspectorate reports pointed to a reduction in safety levels as a result of the pressure on maintenance expenditure. In criticising any lowering of level crossing standards, I place the onus not on the railway inspectorate, which aims at the highest possible standards, but on those who pursue a policy of putting profit and loss before service.

The qualification introduced by the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) about the electrification of the London midland line has my support, but the question of profit and loss rears its head again. The railway that really needs electrification is the midland line, which has more gradients and curves, and which needs the added traction that electrification would bring—more so than the GN line, which is relatively straight, and on which a considerable amount of money has been spent ironing out the curves at Peterborough, Grantham and other places. However, because of the greater passenger utilisation of the former Great Northern railway, it is that which most easily satisfies the criteria set by the Government. In terms of operational improvement, the greatest benefit would be to the midland line out of King's Cross.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): My hon. Friend means St. Pancras.

Mr. Cryer: Of course I meant the midland line out of St. Pancras, and I hope that *Hansard* will correct my momentary error. How could anyone forget the greatness and majesty of St. Pancras in showing that the midland railway had arrived and that the head of all England was not in London, but was at the Derby locomotive works and management centre?

In the context of the profit and loss into which we shall enter in respect of the private works and improvements proposed, it is worth pointing out that the electrification of the Great Northern railway is being penny-pinched for the sake of seven or eight miles, from Leeds to Bradford. I remind the Minister that Bradford was the first city to have Pullman trains, initiated by the midland railway. It is a major city, and it causes considerable resentment that the operating efficiency of British Rail—if that is what concerns the Minister—is to be sullied by the fact that when the electric trains reach Leeds, under the recent electrification, a diesel locomotive will be hooked on the end and the whole lot will be dragged to Bradford interchange.

Electrification should create jobs and produce operating efficiencies. I cannot imagine that British Rail will for long justify a stud of locomotives at Leeds just to haul some trains over the remaining spur between Leeds and Bradford. In a very short time, we shall hear talk of economies and cuts, as we have so often before. I urge the Minister yet again to consider the additional electrification on the GN line, at the same time as taking into account the entreaties and representations of his hon. Friend the Member for Harborough.

No doubt some of my hon. Friends will make out a good case for electrification of the midland main line out of St. Pancras. If the Minister wants some testimony to his career as a Transport Minister, nothing could be better than to do a good job on the GN line and get the overhead wires running all the way from King's Cross to Bradford. Let him not stint or penny-pinch. Then he will not be remembered in Bradford as the mean-minded Transport Minister. I want him to be remembered as the man who supported railways by electrifying a number of lines, and most of all by ensuring that the Settle-Carlisle railway is retained for future years. I hope that he will come to the House very soon to tell us that he will do that.

7.51 pm

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), is still the Member of the European Parliament for Sheffield and a part of Chesterfield. I also see, behind him, one of my colleagues from Sheffield, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), who is a former Member of the European Parliament.

[Mr. Irvine Patnick]

Since joining the House I have discovered the inadequacies of British Rail in many shapes and forms. Let me ensure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I stay on the right lines—at the risk of making a pun! The Bill touches Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster, which entitles me, as a former leader of the Opposition on South Yorkshire county council, to speak on the subject. As someone once reminded me, the finest thing that ever came out of Leeds station was the train to Sheffield.

Having listened to what British Rail has to say about the improvements that it wishes to make in various areas of south Yorkshire, I have discovered that the majority of people who buy a ticket to travel by British Rail want to arrive safely, to sit in a clean carriage and to obtain a seat. They are not bothered about the type of food that is served, the livery that is worn or whether there is a telephone. They are concerned about the time at which a train leaves one city and arrives in another.

I have also discovered that Sheffield and London are cut off from each other from 9.40 pm until 7.39 am the following morning. I have also discovered that it is impossible to leave for, say, Doncaster—as you probably know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—at any reasonable time.

In a former incarnation I corresponded a fair amount with the Minister, explaining that the subsidy provided by the South Yorkshire passenger transport authority was excessive. While we had the cheapest fares of any metropolitan county, we also had the highest rates, and were paying very dearly for them. In various letters I explained to the Minister that Sheffield seemed to be off the beaten track. The Minister, quite rightly, stands at the Dispatch Box and tells hon. Members on both sides of the House that that is a matter for British Rail, but we do not seem to have an opportunity to speak to British Rail.

My parliamentary colleagues from south Yorkshire will probably be pleased to hear what happened when I said that I was not very enthusiastic. I did British Rail the courtesy of saying what I thought of the way in which it treated its passengers: after all, I am one of them. I said that I could not get out of London after 9.40 pm, and could not leave until the next morning. Suddenly, British Rail was prepared to put on a train that left for Sheffield at 11 pm, from May 1989. I do not know whether the word "blackmail" can be used in this place, but I thought it very wrong that that should happen so suddenly.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) in his plea for the electrification of the St. Pancras-Sheffield link. The city of Sheffield needs to be revitalised. The world student games and the presence of the urban development corporation mean that Sheffield needs a further lift to put it back on the map of the United Kingdom. It needs a rail service of which it can be proud, and an urban link. Those things are not available.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is not the motion in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) deficient, in that it refers only to the city of Leicester? If there is a good case for electrifying the main line as far as Leicester, does my hon. Friend agree that there is an even stronger case for going further, through Derby and on to Sheffield?

Mr. Patnick: I thank my hon. Friend for his guidance. When I was a much newer Member, I committed a flagrant sin. I caught one of those "change at Derby" trains, as I thought that I could get back to Sheffield more quickly. That, as I discovered, was another fallacy. I spent a happy hour sitting in the station hotel—which, believe it or not, adjoins the station—drinking Coca-Cola, until the train arrived. I agree that the line should go past Leicester and right up to Sheffield.

Until 5 May, I am still a member of Sheffield city council. I do not know whether a fickle finger was pointed at me, but none the less I remain there. I have been a member of the council for 21 years—and I am only 26 now! During that time we have tried to improve the service that Sheffield obtains from British Rail.

I have read the Bill, and I see that work is being done at Darton and Barnsley. Work is also being done at Rotherham, at Kilnhurst and—as the hon. Member for Bradford, South said—on a crossing at Doncaster. I accept that all that work is needed, but I think that we need other things. We need a service of which everyone can be proud. We need electrification. We also need to "push it back", as I put it, to ensure that instead of travelling from London to Sheffield by road, people are prepared to travel by British Rail. All entreaties, whether they are made to the chairman, the area manager or the regional manager, seem to produce no progress. There seems to be no forum between the House and British Rail. If anything comes out of this debate, I hope that it will be such a forum.

I support the need for electrification and the need for passengers to travel between cities of importance such as Derby, Sheffield and Leicester. If one travels the 30 miles to Doncaster to catch a train there, one can be in London in the excellent time of one hour 38 minutes. Once electrification comes to Doncaster, the time will come down to an hour and a half, and some of my south Yorkshire colleagues may be able to confirm this.

I rang Radio Sheffield to explain the changes that have been made today, but first I had to listen to the British Rail timetable announcements that the trains coming into Sheffield from London were 80 minutes late for various reasons, and that the trains to Wakefield would be late leaving for other reasons.

Sheffield has a second-class rail service, which is not good enough, because we are a first-class city. The sooner something happens between British Rail and the Government to ensure that the first-class city of Sheffield has a first-class service from British Rail, the better it will be for the people of south Yorkshire, including the electorate of Hallam.

8 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): It is not often that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and I are on the same lines, but on this occasion we are. Unfortunately, the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) stops at Leicester, but I am sure that, as well as being supported by the hon. Member for Hallam, others who would like the line to go a little further north——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. In case there is a misunderstanding, perhaps I should inform the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr).

Mr. Caborn: That is unfortunate, because there is a need for discussion about the electrification of the midland main line in the context of the Bill.

I shall add one or two points to those made by the hon. Member for Hallam. In 1991, the world student games are to be held in Sheffield, and it is estimated that they will attract 120 countries and over 6,000 participants. To put it in perspective, that is three times larger than the Commonwealth Games and the second largest sporting event outside the summer Olympics. It will take people between two hours and 40 minutes and two hours and 50 minutes to travel the 160 miles from St. Pancras to Sheffield. That is appalling by any standards. This will be the sports window of the world and to move people to it on such a bankrupt line will denigrate the railway system of the United Kingdom. I hope that British Rail will realise how many people will be supporting that sporting event.

Even more important, in the early 1990s the Channel tunnel will be finished. It took my hon. Friends many hours of debate during the passage of the Channel Tunnel Act to convince the Government that they should start thinking about diversifying away from the Channel tunnel entrance. On the fifth occasion, when we asked them at least to persuade BR to look at the ways in which we could best utilise the tunnel for the regeneration of many of the industrial areas in the north of England, Scotland and Wales, the Minister conceded what is now section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act. There will now be consultations between BR and the Channel tunnel group as to how best the north can take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Channel tunnel. However, without electrification of the midland main line, one of the major industrial parts of the United Kingdom—south Yorkshire—may be left out yet again.

The hon. Member for Hallam mentioned Doncaster. I will not tell any secrets out of school, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but you and I are going to see exactly where the freight interchange will be. I have no doubt that the weight of evidence is on your side, because there will be electrification through to Doncaster. Therefore, I have no doubt that you will allow me the latitude to say that at least the midland main line should be electrified, because it would couple up with the major freight interchange established in the 1960s—the most advanced in Europe —at Tinsley. Unfortunately, because of the decline in industry, that has not been used, but the infrastructure is there, and it would be easy to make it one of the major freight terminals for the north if there were electrification there. That would give south Yorkshire a major asset for its regeneration.

Earlier, we heard that an urban development corporation has been declared there, and that a number of initiatives are being introduced, including an airport and the development of a science park. However, we are short of the electrification that is needed. I was talking to an Australian business man who flew into Heathrow, went on the tube to St. Pancras and then spent nearly three hours trying to get to Sheffield. He said that it is deplorable that those trying to make major investments in south Yorkshire could not get a better transport system, because that was a major deterrent to business men in the north of England. It is important that the speed of the line should be increased considerably, because, if it is not, such business men will be deterred from visiting the area and making the investments that are so badly needed.

Mr. Patnick: Is it not a fact that people travel to Doncaster, are met by company cars, and then driven to Sheffield?

Mr. Caborn: The hon. Gentleman is correct. Some of my colleagues and I travelled on the Doncaster line the other night on a train on which every seat had been pre-booked, so a considerable number of people were standing. Many passengers were business men going to the Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield areas. They were being ferried by company cars from Doncaster to their destinations. That is ludicrous.

The electrification of the midland main line could be a major boost for the steel industry, because a considerable amount of steel is used in the electrification structures. We should seriously consider how we can assist our steel industries with major structural developments such as this.

I am about the third generation of Members of Parliament from the Sheffield area who have been arguing not just for electrification, but for the speeding up of the line. Our pleas have fallen on deaf ears, but now all the way down the line people are saying that, unless we are given at least part of the investment that BR is putting into the rest of its rail infrastructure, we shall be at a major disadvantage in the regeneration of our economies and industries. I hope that the Minister will take on board the serious points that have been made both on the Floor of the House tonight and by people and councils of all political complexions. We are all at one on the importance, at least, of the development of the midland main line, for many reasons.

In the next few years there will be two specific events which I hope will lay down bench marks and give the Government some spur to encourage British Rail. The first will take place in 1991—the world student games. We do not want to bring in the thousands of visitors to south Yorkshire on decrepit, broken-down railway lines with second-class facilities.

The second event is the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993. We do not want to be put at a disadvantage yet again because of the difficulty of getting in and out of that area in comparison with other areas.

It is important that the electrification should go beyond Leicester to south Yorkshire. We would be satisfied if the electrification ended in Sheffield and we assisted Barnsley and Rotherham later.

8.10 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Like the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), I regret that Mr. Speaker was unable to select the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). It is inconceivable that the Bill should go ahead without the inclusion of a firm commitment from British Rail for the electrification of the midland main line. Such a move is logical and essential. We have already had the electrification of the west coast main line, and we read daily about the electrification of the east coast main ine. We now need a definitive and certain plan for the electrification of the midland main line beyond Leicester.

The importance of the midland main line has often been misunderstood. It is the second most important transport corridor in Britain, paralleling the M1 motorway. The midland line links many major centres in the midlands, including Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Alfreton, Loughborough, Market Harborough, Kettering and

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Welwyn. Hon. Members representing constituencies in Yorkshire have already spoken about its importance in south Yorkshire, where it links Sheffield and Chesterfield, and in west Yorkshire, where it links Leeds and Wakefield. It is not some backwater line that has been left over from pre-nationalisation days. It is a vital artery which runs through the heart of Britain. We neglect the well-being of that vital artery at our peril.

I have been told that it makes no economic sense to improve the midland main line. That is a fallacy, because it serves major centres of population, and without doubt it is on a par with the west coast and east coast main lines. It is certainly on a par with both the west and east coast main lines as the highest earner per route mile—£151,000 per route mile in 1984. British Rail has stressed that the costs on the route are too high and that it is uneconomic and difficult to run. On occasions, it has quoted running costs as £52,000 per route mile.

It is well known that the diesel high-speed trains running on the route are expensive to service and are not really cost effective. There is an extremely good argument for electrification on economic grounds. What is sometimes referred to as the sparks effect shows that a 1 per cent. reduction in journey time generates a 1 per cent. increase in revenue. If we take that a stage further, electrification of the midland line would generate at least a 25 per cent. increase in revenue. That is a stunning figure.

We need action now. It should not be left for the future. The lead time of such a capital project is not short. In fact, it will be about six years from the time of authorisation to the time that electrification can be completed. A little later in my speech I shall allude to further cogent reasons for pressing on right now because of the immense developments in travel that are about to overtake us. We require the go-ahead in 1988, which would ensure that the service was in place in 1994.

Another argument against the midland line is that it is a difficult railway to run compared with the east coast main line.

Sir John Farr: My hon. Friend envisages the midland line being electrified by 1994. Does he think that that would be early enough, bearing in mind that the Channel tunnel is due to come into operation in 1993? Would it not be advantageous if the two dates were to coincide?

Mr. Tredinnick: I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend, who has put so much time and effort into the midland electrification project. I shall refer to the Channel tunnel later in my speech. We cannot ignore it, and no doubt we should have electrification sooner rather than later.

One of the arguments against the midland electrification is the so-called difficulty of the curved track. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is not in his place. He would know whether in the days of yore the east coast main line was the Great Northern line or the Great Eastern line. I cannot hope to put across the point with the same wisdom as the hon. Gentleman, but I am told on good authority that the so-called curve problem would be resolved by the introduction of new rolling stock. The new 140 mph Electra class 91 locomotives and the mark IV coach which can tilt on curves are just the solution for the midland line.

We now know that that train will be introduced on the east coast line in 1989. If it were introduced on the midland line, it would cut journey times by 25 per cent. The journey from Leicester to London would take just 58 minutes, and that from Sheffield to London just 110 minutes. I see the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) nodding in agreement. That would be a wonderful boost for the east midlands and for Yorkshire.

What is the converse of all that? If electrification does not go ahead, what will it mean for the east midlands, for my constituency of Bosworth and for the hosiery and knitwear town of Hinckley and its burgeoning new industries? What will it mean for Hinckley and for the people who reside in Anstey, Ulverscroft, Groby and Ratby who commute into the city of Leicester? It will mean long-term economic disaster. If we ignore the midland main line and do not modernise it, the line will die. That will affect our constituents and lead to economic suicide.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): An electric train that runs through my constituency from Gatwick to Victoria station has led to increased economic activity in the area. Does my hon. Friend agree that an excellent train such as that, with an excellent speed, generates industrial activity?

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making such a helpful point. Improved communications and infrastructure lead to increased industrial activity, which increases the revenue that goes to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I see that my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport is taking note of that.

Mr. Snape: I hesitate to intervene during the hon. Gentleman's most interesting speech. The whole world might agree that the electrification of the railways generates greater economic activity, but unfortunately the Government do not think so. They insist on strict economic criteria that exclude the provisions that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. I hope that he will be able to convince the Minister as well as the rest of the House.

Mr. Tredinnick: I must admit that, in a sense, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I hesitated about raising that point, but my constituents are concerned about the constraints that have been imposed on British Rail. I am a great believer in efficiency and effectiveness. I should hate the hon. Gentleman to misunderstand me for one second, but there is a feeling that British Rail is having to trim on the midland main line in order to support the west coast and east coast main lines.

Mr. Patnick: Has my hon. Friend considered the possibility of British Rail owning the track and the signalling and other equipment, and private trains running on the line? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, really!"] Opposition Members say, "Oh, really," but that is no different from——

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman ought to put his money where his mouth is.

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Gentleman says that I should put my money where my mouth is. I recollect that Opposition Members used that argument when bus services were deregulated. They said that deregulation would result in no bus services. [HON. MEMBERS:

"Speech."] It is not a speech; it is an intervention. It is now possible to catch a bus from Sheffield to any other city in the north, but Opposition Members said that that could not be done. I suggest that my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) should consider the possibility of British Rail running the system, with private trains being used on the line.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I suspect that Opposition Members, who are smiling at my hon. Friend's helpful intervention, may have to think long and hard about what he has said. The electrification of the midland main line may have to be carried out with private funds. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has done a great deal of hard work on this issue. I shall leave him to make that point when he speaks later in the debate, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Opposition Members may have to bite the bullet.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I am following my hon. Friend's argument carefully. Is he suggesting that electrification is an end in itself, or that it is a means of securing a better service for his constituents? If it is a means of obtaining a better service for his constituents, he may wish to take into account the fact that the HST trains are capable of a far higher speed than they are using on the line. It is line limitation, not the form of traction that is used, that is causing the slower speeds about which he complains. It is not true to say that electrification will lead to faster services than can now be provided. The existing HSTs are limited to 100 mph, but they are capable of 125 mph.

Mr. Tredinnick: I take my hon. Friend's point, but the research that I have seen shows conclusively that the new high-speed rolling stock that is able to tilt on curves would lead to faster services. I am led to believe that trains would be able to travel at 140 mph on the Leicester line.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is it not right that the existing HST trains will soon be 25 years old? They are quite ancient. The existing line has its limitations, but new rolling stock would be able to travel much faster on it.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The rolling stock often covers 1,000 miles a day and it will come to the end of its useful life in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Ashby: Some of it already has.

Mr. Tredinnick: Yes. The present rolling stock is not as reliable as electric trains. If, because of a constituency crisis, hon. Members had to drive to their constituencies in cars with 120,000 miles on the clock, would they feel happy about driving out of New Palace Yard in such cars? I should not be happy about doing so. Ancient vehicles require more tender loving care, which can be translated into increased maintenance costs.

Mr. Snape: Would the hon. Gentleman care to refute the Minister's argument by suggesting that the yuppies who have moved to Norwich and Ipswich have done so largely because of improved communications after electrification of the railway line? I hope that he will be able to convince the Minister that electrification has been achieved with 20-year-old electric locomotives cascaded —to use the lovely word that is used by Department of Transport advisers—from other parts of the country? If that can be done with 20-year-old locomotives, what could be done in Sheffield, Bosworth and Doncaster with brand new electric locomotives and rolling stock?

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Gentleman's point is valid. I intend to refer to the effect of changing attitudes to travel—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will not stray too far from the British Railways (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Tredinnick: I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the point will be relevant.

The hon. Member referred to yuppies. I am surprised that he did not refer to a member of his party who features in the *Evening Standard* today as having bought a yuppified house.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to "cascading". My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, the hon. Member for Leicester, East and I would be happy to have a few more high-speed trains cascading down the Leicester line. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has fought long and hard to get such services reinstated, and has achieved much. A certain number of east coast main line trains will cascade over on to the midland line. However, we return to the point of how reliable they will be. That rolling stock will be wearing out, and surely it is better to bite the bullet early, bring in the new electric trains and thereby cut costs.

I have referred to economic disaster in Leicestershire in the long term. There will not be economic disaster overnight, but in 20, 30, 40 or 50 years, what will happen when there are main arteries running either side of a prosperous county such as Leicestershire? It will be economic suicide for the east midlands, and Leicester, Derby, Loughborough, Market Harborough, Kettering and Wellingborough will lose their inter city services and be demoted to secondary status. These towns and cities cannot be served acceptably from the east coast main line. The regional transport link provided by the midland line will be lost. If British Rail decides in its wisdom to divert the main line traffic off the midland main line and down the east coast main line, I see no future for the midland main line. The midlands will be in a terrible state.

We have touched on why we should have electric trains. We want them because they are more reliable than diesels and cost much less to maintain. With electrification, we would say goodbye to cancellations. My hon. Friend the Member for Hallam faces this problem. He has a lot of trouble getting back to his constituents. We know what a dedicated constituency Member he is. He is always there at the platform, hoping to get home to hold another surgery.

Electrification would solve the problem. There would be fewer delays and there need not be so many back-up locomotives. The amount of equipment necessary to back up the existing rolling stock is a problem. We have all been on train journeys all over the country where diesels are running and seen the cancellations and perhaps suffered when, unfortunately, it has not been possible to bring into service another half of a high-speed train unit. Such problems would end with electrification.

By the year 2000 the InterCity 125s will be nearly 25 years old and will have been travelling 800 to 1,000 miles a day, but trains will have been replaced on the east coast main line after just 13 years of service. Plans need to be

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made now for the modernisation and electrification of the midland main line. If it can be done on the east coast main line, it can certainly be done on the midland main line.

The arguments put forward by British Rail to electrify the east coast main line have not been put forward for the midland main line, but the same arguments apply, as I hope hon. Members agree. My fear for Leicestershire is that it is in danger of becoming a rail transport backwater.

Sir John Farr: A museum.

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend is right. The failure to electrify and to put new rolling stock into Leicestershire will mean that growth will be restricted and businesses hindered. Where will we be when the European market is opened up in 1992? There will be an incredible new market, offering tremendous opportunities, and suddenly we will be trying to compete and to export our goods to that exciting market. What will there be? In the midlands there will be antiquated rolling stock and old cast-offs from the east coast main line—thank you very much, east coast main line. The midland will be a sort of cast-off centre line, with the fast services going up either side of it.

The fact—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam will support me—is that business will not locate where there are old-fashioned railway links. Business demands, and is entitled to, good communications. That is the way towards regeneration. I have discussed this matter with my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam.

Mr. Patnick: It is interesting that the journey time on the Leicester-St. Pancras section has increased, although British Rail promised to reduce it once resignalling was completed at the end of 1987. The journey time from Sheffield to London is two hours 35 minutes, which means 60 mph with, typically, six intermediate stops. It is a matter of time and speed. I listened to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport—I have heard that one should believe what Ministers say—but these trains do not run anywhere near 100 mph. It is said that they travel at 60 mph.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, yet again, for his wisdom in amplifying my points.

Running on from that—no doubt you will be glad that I am, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the demand for rail services is another aspect of the issue. That demand is increasing. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East was good enough to draw my attention to the effect of people moving away from town. The trend is illustrated in the east midlands—in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire—in house prices. Leicestershire is the sixth most prosperous county in Britain, and that is largely due to the policies of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That might not, of course, be everyone's idea, and I should hate in saying that to lose the all-party support that exists. There is a feeling of warmth in the Chamber.

Sir John Farr: On reflection, does my hon. Friend think that some of the popularity must be due to the quality and calibre of local Members of Parliament?

Mr. Tredinnick: As a new Member I hesitate to make that point, but I accept my hon. Friend's wisdom. I have relied on his advice and help and, I hope, learnt quite a lot from him, not least from his approach to the Bill—which may not be lost on the Opposition.

As I was saying before that helpful intervention, the impact of the changing travel pattern all over the country is illustrated by increased property prices. Property prices around Harborough have increased by about 50 per cent. in much less than a year. In Hinckley, the heart of my constituency, property prices have increased by one third in six months. I am told that at stations on the east coast main line, such as Grantham and even Melton Mowbray, commuters are queuing to get on the trains. Those commuters have an impact on property prices. Labour Members, especially the hon. Member for Leicester, East, may not think that that is a good idea, but it is happening and we must face it.

With that changing pattern, it is absurd to argue that there is insufficient demand to support a vastly improved service on the midland main line. My hon. Friend the Member for Hallam and the hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned the impossibility of finding a seat on a train without a reservation. With such a situation, it is impossible to argue that there would not be sufficient demand or revenue. It has been argued that if we increase the revenue by 1 per cent., we increase the speed and effectiveness of the trains by 1 per cent. Surely, if there is a 25 per cent. increase in revenue, there will be plenty of passengers to pay for that.

I should like to draw to the attention of hon. Members an article in today's *Daily Mail*, which supports that point. It is entitled "City Exodus in the Quest for Good Life" and states:

"The quest for a better life is leading more and more people away from the cities and suburbs, a survey reveals today."

That is no quack survey. It is not one of those spurious polls that are thrust at hon. Members from time to time, stating that 75 per cent. of people are in favour of something and one then finds that the sample consists of six people. It is not one of those polls for which one pays 50p and then gets into a tangle with the taxman because one forgets to make out the sum to the constituency association, pays it in direct and is then accused of not declaring it. This is a survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

This trend has been going on for a long time. I find it strange that British Rail has not cottoned on to that pattern of moving away from the cities. In 1931, there were 6·7 million people in inner London, whereas there are now only 3·9 million. They have gone out to the shires. They like it out there. The OPCS spokesman said:

"The city is becoming more and more of a workplace rather than somewhere to live."

One can argue that the same is true of the city of Leicester. Villages in my constituency are becoming more and more interested in computers—*[Interruption.]* I mean that they are important as commuter bases. I have obviously tickled the sense of humour of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East. At one time I worked in the computer industry, and I sometimes get my computers and commuters muddled. One can get into frightful tangles if one is making a sales pitch to computers for commuters! It can be difficult.

Mr. Snape: I shall let the hon. Gentleman sort out his computers from his commuters. He is making a creditable effort and I hope that the Government Whips will recognise that.

Let us return to the Bill and the important point that the hon. Gentleman was trying to make before he got mixed up with his computers and commuters. The effects of electrification on lines in his constituency and on the midland main line would be beneficial, and the Minister should take that into consideration when British Rail submits proposals to electrify those lines.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for guiding me back to the points that I now hope to make.

There are three lines in my constituency. There is the charming Market Bosworth light railway. I recommend hon. Members to visit my constituency in the summer so that they can chug along by steam. There is the important link from Hinkley to Nuneaton and beyond in one direction, and to Leicester in the other direction. That is a congested service and I frequently receive letters about it.

If the main line to Leicester is electrified, we are in with a tremendous chance. We should branch it out and electrify that cross-route. The electrification of other lines to form a grid is most important, particularly for Yorkshire Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Hallam might help me on this. As I understand it, it is possible to link into York a range of cross-routes. When the main line is in place we will obtain added value simply by branching out electrified lines. We should be able to channel commuters on to that line to make it viable.

There are four key points that make the electrification of the midland line a more feasible proposition than it was before. The introduction this year of the 140 mph Electra class 91 locomotives could cut the midland journey times by 25 per cent.

Mr. Patnick: Dick Turpin's trip to York set me thinking about this point. I inquired whether there was a link between Doncaster, on the route to York, and Sheffield. I discovered that that link was run, not by British Rail, but by South Yorkshire passenger transport executive. British Rail's press release—I apologise to the House for having lost the front sheet—states:

"This together with a new approach to track maintenance under which the engineers are being given longer at each site to maximise the amount of work they can do during the time available, means that the impact of track maintenance work is much more predictable and suitable allowances and suitable allowances can be built into timetables before they are published."

It appears that British Rail is aware that something is wrong with the track and is introducing new machinery to speed up the trains.

Mr. Tredinnick: I have considered only the question whether fast trains can use that track, but my hon. Friend is right. The issue of the new trains and track is relevant. As a result of the development of the brilliant new trains, the amount of money needed to be spent on relaying the track will be reduced. The French had to lay a completely new track for the 160 mph train from Paris to Lyons, at vast expense. The genius of the British Rail train is that it can run on conventional curves.

That is the first key difference between the situation that exists now and that which existed a couple of years ago. The second key difference is the subject of the Bill, and that is the redevelopment of the King's Cross-St. Pancras area by the British Rail property board, to include the new cross-London mainline station for InterCity and Channel tunnel trains which, of course, will have direct links to the midland main line.

We have already seen dramatic developments in British Rail's and London Transport's approach to rail travel in London. I thought that it was an absolute scandal that so many lines, such as the one that runs by Stamford bridge and Chelsea football ground, were not open to passenger services. I could never understand why certain railway lines around London were not used.

Great things are happening. We now have the Snow Hill tunnel, albeit for light traffic, for Network SouthEast. The new King's Cross-St. Pancras development is a super-Snow Hill, with its 12 platforms at a cost of £100 million, being sunk way below the surface. We in this great capital city will suddenly find ourselves with a fantastic through station, an InterCity station of a quality that we would hardly have conceived possible until the plan was drawn up.

We shall have not only easy passenger access, which will link the east coast main line, the Great Midland or midland railway lines, but a north London cross-link. Of course, those railways are short additions to the line. They have to run only about 100 yd of tunnel on the midland line and about 400 or 500 yd on the others. They are relatively cheap to do. The idea of bringing a network of trains from the east coast main line and the midland main line into a through station in London is wonderful. We have super high-speed trains which do 140 mph, and superb new facilities being built. When we link that to my next point, which relates to the Channel tunnel, we are talking about some sort of railway network.

The Channel tunnel will be a reality in 1993. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough was quite right to say that I had been talking about 1994. When we talk about the midland main line electrification, we are really talking about 1993. That is the key year. If we do not get our act together for 1993, there will be all kinds of congestion and problems. There is the issue of where we go. We will have a funnel with the east coast and the west coast main lines, and, I hope, the midland line coming into the fantastic new station. How will they go out the other side? I cannot quite recall, but I do not think that they can go out through the Snow Hill tunnel, because it was built for lightweight traffic, but I may be wrong. I introduced my remark by saying that I was not sure.

The point that I want to make—never mind the Snow Hill tunnel—relates to the situation that faces Channel tunnel traffic running between London and the south coast. A couple of years ago I was fortunate to be able to go to Japan and travel with a special train pass around the four Japanese islands. One can travel at a tremendous rate around Japan and see it very well. At Tokyo airport there is not only an ordinary Japanese rail network, but a private system, which was built through the suburbs to alleviate the tremendous traffic that flows to Tokyo airport.

With the expected volume of traffic going through the Channel tunnel and the enormous development on the French side—I am not saying that we do not have a development of tremendous credit, and more credit to my hon. Friend the Minister for pushing ahead with it—on the basis of my experience, there must be a case for building an entirely new railway line down to the south coast. I am thinking of a private line. If constituents are to have a

[Mr. Tredinnick]

proper service to get their goods through the tunnel to Europe—to Berlin, down to Naples, Lisbon and other destinations—I wonder whether it will be feasible, however brilliant the signalling system is, to run heavy trains on that commuter system.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I have listened with interest to my hon. Friend. Any sympathy that I may have had for his case is fast evaporating if he wants to drive a new railway line down through the suburbs of south-east London, through Surrey, Kent and my constituency. We have long debates about the tunnel. This is a debate about the British Railways (No. 2) Bill. I urge my hon. Friend to stick to the midland main line, which I am sure he knows well, and leave Network SouthEast to hon. Members who know it well.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for preventing me from straying. I was not advocating building a railway line across a green belt, but it is possible to run lines along existing lines. That is the way it is done in Japan. As we are tackling the problem in such a sophisticated way, with the tremendous mainline station in London and all the money that will be spent on it, it may be necessary to take some action.

Sir John Farr: The point that my hon. Friend is trying to make, and making well, is that the chunnel—the Channel tunnel—is of no use to the east midlands unless the London-midland line is electrified. The Channel tunnel will be used only by electrified trains. Therefore, without the electrification of the London-midland line, the Channel tunnel offers no opportunities to the east midlands.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for helping me on that point.

We have a sophisticated new transport system. It must be sensible to make improvements to the track for the Channel tunnel—I shall leave it at that—but the midlands should be included in it.

Hon. Members will recall that trains that do not run on the new electrified track will not be able to go to Europe. That is of tremendous concern. On the east coast and west coast main lines, high-speed trains will race through to goodness know where—right to the southern foot of Italy. The constituents of the hon. Member for Leicester, East will have to go to King's Cross or St. Pancras, and change there. That is not right. If the midland main line is electrified, two trains a day will run from Leicester to Europe. That will be wonderful.

The towns and cities that are served by the midland main line will enjoy that superior service only if it is electrified. In contrast, the west coast route will receive at least four day services and two night services, while the east coast route, which serves a smaller population—this is a significant point—will have three day trains and one night service. Where is the justice in that?

Mr. Patnick: About 12 trains a day run from the major cities of Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham to London and back, whereas smaller towns such as Kettering and Wellingborough have about 16 to 18 trains a day, even though InterCity provides a service to all those major towns and cities. Even without the electrification, which I dearly want, I contend that areas such as those represented by my hon. Friend and myself are badly served by British Rail.

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend puts his case eloquently and speaks from the heart. I speak from the heart, and I assure hon. Members that if I did not feel so strongly about this issue I would not be advancing it in the way that I am.

Mr. Snape: What about a fatigue allowance?

Mr. Tredinnick: I am not sure that a fatigue allowance would be permitted.

The Channel tunnel is soon to be completed, there is the new St. Pancras-King's Cross terminal, with its wonderful new underground platforms, there are the new high-speed trains and there will shortly be a new cross-London market of 12·5 million people. It will be feasible to run trains from Sheffield to Brighton, so the market for travel will increase enormously. British Rail has recently run more trains through the old West Kensington station——

Mr. Snape: Kensington Olympia.

Mr. Tredinnick: If trains ran through the old West Kensington station they might run into a District line train, and that could cause all kinds of complications.

There will shortly be a vastly increased travel market. When a service is increased and routeing is improved, there is an increase in demand. That has been well illustrated by what has happened to long-haul air routes around the world. One can now buy a round-the-world ticket from firms in London for £800. Is it surprising that demand has rocketed? There is now a better global service, and its cheap price has increased demand.

Mr. Patnick: To assist my hon. Friend, I shall give a quotation from a British Rail press release dated 1 March. It concerns an investment of £306 million in the east coast main line to London. It says:

"The secret lies in new engineering techniques and the purchase of 11 track stabilising machines. These permit trains to run at full speed as soon as engineering work is finished."

It continues, and this is where the savings will be made:

"The result is a 16 per cent. savings in track laying costs"——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would care to make his own speech? He is making many interventions. An intervention is a pertinent comment or a question to the hon. Member who has the Floor. Will the hon. Gentleman make his pertinent comment and allow the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) to proceed with his speech?

Mr. Patnick: I think that I was expecting too much assistance from Opposition Members. The press release says:

"InterCity will save £1,000 per day in brake wear on the London-Edinburgh journey alone, and £213,000 a year in fuel savings from a smoother ride."

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I shall have words with him after the debate about attempting to lead the House astray.

If you will forgive the pun, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not want to get into a loop, but I must return to the issue of curves. The implications of what has been said by

the opponents of the electrification of the midland main line is that the new high-speed tilting trains cannot run on that track. On 30 October 1975, an advanced passenger train E, a test train, ran from Leicester to London in 58 minutes. Let it never be said that that is impossible. It ran on the old unimproved track with its problems and curves, and since then the track has been developed, so there could be an even better service.

Mr. Snape: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that British Rail management was so impressed by the performance of the APTE that it ran the train straight into the scrap yard in 1980 and no one has seen it since?

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning that. There are times when efficiency involves cutting certain projects. I may be out of order when I say that the TSR2 was cut by I forget which Government. I think that it was the Labour Government who cut that brilliant technological project.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman was still at nursery school then.

Mr. Tredinnick: I remember that happening when I was at school and it had a great effect on me and—I was about to say my honourable schoolmates—my not so honourable colleagues. Indeed, as far as I remember, most of them were thoroughly dishonourable and disreputable. We had fairly extensive opportunities to study railways there and my interest came about because I always had a Boy's Own interest in trains. There is a valid point in that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because if one studies train sets at an early age, one develops an affinity with them and that makes it much easier to understand these complexities.

Having been slightly flippant, I must return to a serious and important point, and the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East may care to note it. So far in this debate we have not heard a word about what will happen to the east coast main line electrification engineers who are building the line. What will happen to them when the line is completed? We have a brilliant, dedicated team of people. Are we to break up the team? I say no, and I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to give a commitment that that superb team of engineers who are powering the east coast main line electrification northwards should have their jobs guaranteed and should be switched to another project——

Mr. Snape: For life.

Mr. Tredinnick: I did not intend to score political points tonight, because I was looking for the hon. Gentleman's support.

Mr. Patnick: Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) does not have a job for life?

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks, but in the spirit of the debate in which we seem to have all-party agreement on this midland main line electrification it would be churlish of me to try and score points off the hon. Gentleman, although I am tempted to do so.

Electrification is not just an issue for Members of Parliament. The House should be aware that Leicestershire county council, Derbyshire county council, Nottingham county council and Sheffield city council are sponsoring a study to reinforce the case for electrification. Hon. Members will recognise that as a clear illustration of the deep and heartfelt feeling that exists in and around the east midlands. My constituents will be aggrieved if they do not have the same sort of services as others when the Channel tunnel is built and amazing new rail links are built in London which will get them and their goods, such as their hosiery and knitwear exports, to Paris or wherever they want to go.

There is tremendous economic growth in my constituency. New companies are moving into the area and it is a major distribution centre. We need such a link, and we need this kind of support. I draw the House's attention to the fact that these county councils—perhaps unusually because of their different complexions and attitudes—have joined together to control the situation.

There was much that I hoped to say tonight—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Patnick: I wonder whether I can assist my hon. Friend with his case for electrification. The journey time from London to Edinburgh is 25 minutes shorter, at four hours and 23 minutes. The journey from Newcastle to London is 269 miles, which is completed in three hours or less, at 90 mph. The fastest journey is two hours and 50 minutes. The fastest time for the journey from Leeds to London is two hours and eight minutes. Time, as we all know, and as Opposition Members will appreciate, is money.

Mr. Tredinnick: I do not know whether my hon. Friend is dropping a tactful hint when he says that time is money, but I assure him that I am not being paid for this delivery tonight. I am hesitant whether to leave some points to be made by my hon. Friends. One of my hon. Friends is shaking his head.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The hon. Member mentioned the service to Leicester, and one of his hon. Friends tabled an amendment on the subject, which was not selected. He has also mentioned the cross-party support that there has been, not least from the Nottinghamshire county council, for further extension and electrification. Will the hon. Gentleman address some of his remarks to places slightly north of Leicester?

Mr. Tredinnick: I hope that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) will have a chance to make that point. The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I have not majored on Nottingham tonight, but, if I had, I might have had problems driving through my constituency tomorrow. The first thing is to get the line built to Leicester. That is what we are talking about. One of the arguments that is made about the electrification of the main line—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Patnick: I advise the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) that Nottingham was discussed before he graced the House with his presence. Nottingham has been included in our great plan.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We can have only one intervention at a time.

Mr. Tredinnick: I was saying, before yet another helpful intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam, that there is one other argument—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ashby: There is one further point. My hon. Friend and I come from adjoining constituencies. Leicester is the central town for Leicestershire, but Nottingham is close to my constituency. A number of my constituents would be grateful for electrification through to Nottingham, which is their nearest centre. Large sectors of the county of Leicestershire would benefit also from electrification through to Nottingham. It is therefore in both our interests.

Mr. Tredinnick: In just outlining my speech, which is all I have had time to do so far, it has not been possible for me to go into the matters that pertain to other lines. However, it is very helpful that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) has brought up this matter.

Mr. Allen: It is important that the hon. Gentleman clears up the contradiction. He has stated that he would not wish to return even to his own constituency if he added his voice to the issue of the wider scope for electrification. His hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) said that there was a wider strategy. What I am asking my colleague the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) to elucidate—I am sure that he can do so at some length—is the strategy for electrification. Surely it is not a matter for parochial constituency interests and the idea that "It must go to my constituency and no one else's," because if that is the hon. Gentleman's view, electrification will not go to any hon. Member's constituency.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He accuses me of having a constituency interest, but I cannot think that his interest in Nottingham is anything other than parochial. If he thinks a little more carefully about what I have said, he will realise that I have spent a lot of time on strategy and concentrated on Leicester because I am a Leicestershire Member and proud of it, as the hon. Member for Leicester, East, who has been good enough to listen to my words will know——

Mr. Vaz: Not for long.

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Gentleman says, "Not for long."

I do not want to appear parochial, but we must take first things first.

I now want to turn to the success of the electrification of the St. Pancras-Bedford stretch. Before that line was electrified, we were told in a whole range of arguments why that could not be done; why it would be a great waste of money; why it could not possibly work; and that there was not the time, the people or the equipment to do it. All the old arguments were trotted out.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's September 1987 report, "British Railways Board: Network SouthEast" Cm 204, contains a case study of the St. Pancras-Bedford line electrification. It shows that once the initial difficulties had been overcome that part of the line became relatively profitable after electrification, and has remained so.

If hon. Members want further confirmation of that, they could go to the Library to ask for Mr. Michael Bonavia's 1986 book, "Twilight of British Rail". Chapter 10, which is somewhat inaptly named "The electrifying experience" because Bonavia is talking about closures, argues that the Bedford-Sheffield line is an obvious candidate for electrification. Bonavia states:

"The Midland main line (Bedford to Sheffield) is an electrification scheme that would also be facilitated by the work already done".

This is the work to which I have already referred—the 50 miles of main line which, as he puts it, is now "under wires".

"This would also be a conveniently self-contained project so far as the principal passenger services are concerned"—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should wait, because he then states:

"more so in fact than the east coast main line."

Here we have an expert——

Mr. Allen: Does the hon. Gentleman concede that Michael Bonavia's book was written before the onset of the 2·7 per cent. return which the Government now expect on InterCity services? Given that expenditure on InterCity services runs, as I understand it, to about £600 million and that the expected income would be £500 million, will the hon. Gentleman concede that the money to those that £100 million gap has to be found from somewhere and that it may well come through major closures on the very sections of lines that he is proposing should be electrified, and that that would be the responsibility of his own Government?

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for arguing the case for privatisation, or at least private investment. Typically for an Opposition Member, he thinks in terms of reductions, but we are talking about increasing the service. It may be important at times to have injections of private capital. Perhaps on another occasion, or even this evening, we will hear some profound and interesting proposals for alternative funding from my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough.

Mr. Allen: The hon. Gentleman has introduced the political spice that may have been missing from the debate by mentioning privatisation. Would not building up and boosting the east coast main line electrification make it the prime target for privatisation, so that there would be a major diversion of further services from the very lines that he would like electrified?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a wide debate, but it does not spread as far as privatisation.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful for that intervention, because if the Government, in their wisdom, decided to privatise the east coast main line, the proceeds of that sale——

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Gentleman has said a great deal. I meant to say that we have had a warm feeling this evening because there has been——

Mr. Snape: It is rapidly cooling off.

Mr. Tredinnick: I would not want it to cool off. I was not hoping to make political points, and if I have been flippant, I had not intended to be——

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman has not been flippant; he has been long-winded. He has been speaking for 70 minutes, largely due, Madam Deputy Speaker, to your and your predecessors' tolerance, and he has said little about the British Railways (No. 2) Bill. It might be amusing for

juvenile—or even senior—Conservative Back Benchers to delay legislation such as this, but it means that important work which could be done from one end of the railways to the other is delayed. I tell these Conservative Members for nothing that this is likely to lead to exchanges through the usual channels tomorrow.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate can, to some extent, extend beyond the contents of the Bill, but it must relate to the Bill. I remind the hon. Gentleman of that.

Mr. Tredinnick: The points that I have been making about the electrification of the main line from St. Pancras to Leicester and beyond have not been made lightly. I say that in all sincerity. It is essential to the east midlands and to the long-term well-being of my constituency. This has not been a time-wasting exercise, because this subject must be dealt with. If I did not feel so strongly about it, I would not be in the Chamber tonight.

9.23 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): We have heard an interesting, albeit drawn-out speech from the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), largely concerned with the need for the electrification of the former midland railway main line from St. Pancras, and I shall return to that subject in a moment.

First, however, I want to refer to the Bill and the detail of the works therein. Speeches by the Minister and myself are in no way intended to truncate the debate and, provided that they succeed in catching your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, hon. Members on both sides are free to refer to the Bill at whatever length they like.

An unfortunate aspect of our parliamentary procedures is that when the British Railways Board—I rarely defend it because, unlike Conservative Members, I have no great faith in its philosophy or some of its policies—wants to carry out the smallest or mildest alteration to the existing railway network, or to construct any new lines to add to it, a Bill is necessary, and that enables hon. Members on both sides to block the work by tabling appropriate blocking motions. Indeed, hon. Members can raise the need for better or electrified railway services to and from their constituencies.

I wish that such procedures were available for our road network, but hon. Members will be aware that roads are built and maintained and the money spent without reference to the House. Without causing undue offence to the hon. Member for Bosworth, the fact that he spent so much time on the east coast main line illustrates that it is about time that our procedures regarding British Railways Bills should be reformed.

Work No. 1 in the Bill relates to the development of a spur railway at Battersea in connection with the development of Battersea power station as a leisure centre. I hope the House will note that that proposal is made with the financial support of the developers. I hope that the Minister can tell us that that financial support was a condition of planning permission for the development. If not, that support is none the less welcome, and perhaps it may set a precedent. If the envisaged use of the new leisure centre matches the forecasts, it is perhaps as well that a new railway line has been proposed; otherwise the prospect of hon. Members entering or leaving this place by road would be considerably diminished. I hope that I shall not be considered parochial for saying that.

Work No. 4 relates to the construction of running loops east of Ashford for Channel tunnel traffic. The hon. Member for Bosworth touched upon that in his long-drawn-out contribution. Apparently his call for additional railway lines in Kent was resented by the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed). I regret that he is not in his place at present.

The hon. Member for Bosworth made a valid point about the inadequacy of the existing railway line between London and the Channel tunnel mouth. That inadequacy might be overcome if the running loops east of Ashford were extended as far as necessary in both directions to create a four-track main line between the mouth of the Channel tunnel and the new Channel tunnel terminus at Waterloo. I do not expect the instant agreement of the Minister to that proposal, but I hope that he agrees that the existing railway network is inadequate for the envisaged additional traffic when the Channel tunnel is open.

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), I should also like to comment on Work No. 7, which relates to the installation of barrier machines at a level crossing in Lincoln. The existing gates are to be replaced with full lifting barriers. I always believe that it is inherently unfair that 50 per cent. of the cost of such works must be met within British Rail's budget. The purpose of such barriers is to protect motorists from the consequences of their own stupidity. The practice of driving around half barriers as they are lifting or ignoring the warning lights place motorists in considerable danger and occasionally—as we saw a couple of years ago at Lockington—places train travellers in some danger. We believe that the cost of such works should be met entirely from the roads budget, which appears endless when other matters are considered.

I return to the question of the midland main line and whether or not it should be electrified. Although it would be unfair to describe all hon. Members who are in the House at the moment as railway buffs, there is a consensus that the line should be considered for electrification. I think that proposal would be supported by hon. Members in the Chamber. With such proposals being judged as they are, and with the problems of proving the case financially, it is unlikely that the go-ahead for that will ever be given.

In an exchange at Transport question time on 18 April, the Minister said that the proposed electrification of the railway line between Manchester and Blackpool would cost £12 million. He should remember that he could not buy much motorway for that sum. The Minister thought that it was more cost-effective and efficient to use Sprinter diesel multiple units between those two points.

If one considers the Manchester-Blackpool line in isolation on a strictly cost return basis, that might be true, but we did not build the M55 motorway to Blackpool on such a basis. It would be stupid to consider the M55, which runs from a field north of Preston to a roundabout at Squires gate, solely as a road linking Preston and Blackpool. No one would build a motorway on that basis. Yet only 10 days ago the Minister said that it would cost £12 million to electrify the Manchester-Blackpool railway line. He was considering it in isolation; he did not take into account the fact that it would give British Rail an electrified diversionary line to Scotland. It would enable

[Mr. Peter Snape]

trains from Euston to Scotland to go via Manchester, although that would take longer. The possibility of generating more traffic is ignored.

A similar proposal for the midland main line is likely to be greeted in the same way. Of course, the midland main line from St. Pancras is electrified as far as Bedford. The Minister may need to consult his advisers, but perhaps he could tell the House—if not tonight, at some time in the future—whether such electrification proposals would be considered on the basis of the additional traffic which would be generated between London and Sheffield or London and Leicester, or whether they would be measured against the likely increase in traffic between Bradford and Leicester or Bedford and Sheffield.

Given the track record of the Department of Transport in these matters, the Department is likely to say that, because the line is already electrified as far as Bedford, as part of Network SouthEast rather than the InterCity network, it can take into consideration only passengers travelling north from Bedford to Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield. I do not say that that is how the proposal would be evaluated, but it would not surprise me if it were done in that way. I hope that the Minister will let us know exactly how proposals for the electrification of the whole of the former midland main line from St. Pancras would be evaluated.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) talked about bad late-night connections from Sheffield. If one looks at British Rail's timetable, it is non-political to point out that anyone who wishes to head north out of London faces the same problem. Those who wish to go south from London are better treated.

Mr. Patnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Snape: I will give way after I have made this point.

It is a fact that those for whom late-night services have been traditionally provided live south of London, so far as railway management is concerned. All-night services have long been provided from stations such as Waterloo and Victoria for those people privileged—if that is the right term—to live south of London, yet such services have never been provided for those of us who are, perhaps, wise enough to live in the frozen north.

Mr. Patnick: There are three trains serving the London to Doncaster route. There is one at 22.55 hours, which arrives in Doncaster at 1.29; one at 23.20 hours, arriving at 1.20; and another at 23.59, which I do not commend to the House, arriving at 4.03 hours. Again, it is the east coast route that is provided with the rolling stock and a better timetable.

Mr. Snape: I largely agree with the point that I believe the hon. Gentleman seeks to make. British Rail's costs are largely fixed because the equipment is in situ and the track exists. It is a short-sighted policy on its part not to run trains. I do not like to be fair to British Rail, but one must recognise that such a policy is forced upon it by the Government, because it is often more economical not to run trains. The ultimate—and I hope that I am not writing the Tory party's next manifesto for it—is to save £1 billion a year by not running any trains at all. I do not know how one would tackle the congestion, but such a philosophy might appeal to the hon. Member for Hallam and his right hon. Friend the Minister, and to those in the Department of Transport who prefer to play at road building and road repairing than sending cheques to the British Railways Board to pay for a proper rail system. I have great sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point and hope that it will receive a response from the Minister.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of British Rail's second-class service to Sheffield. I am sure he will join us in our next censure motion, or whatever, on the Department of Transport for the niggardly way in which it has approached the funding of British Rail services.

Mr. Patnick: That is not what I said.

Mr. Snape: I do not want to ruin the hon. Gentleman's promotion prospects, but I did not make that speech—he did. The logical conclusion to his speech is that there should be greater funding for the midland main line to Sheffield, and we certainly agree. The hon. Gentleman also joined my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) in emphasising the need for greater expenditure on the provision of Channel tunnel services, with which I am sure we also all agree.

One reason why the Opposition were anxious to put clause 40 of the Channel Tunnel Bill onto the statute book, ensuring that British Rail will by the end of next year publish its countrywide plans for both passenger and freight traffic, was that we knew full well—as does the rest of the House, if it were honest—that British Rail puts forward no proposals for investment, electrification, or whatever, unless they meet the criteria laid down by the Department of Transport.

The Minister says more often than some of his predecessors, "I have received no proposals from British Rail about electrification or about Channel tunnel developments for freight facilities, extra passenger facilities, new locomotives and rolling stock. But if I do receive any such proposals, I will consider them." All of us, if we are honest, will recognise that that is a con. Regular contact is maintained between the Minister's Department and the British Railways Board. The board is left in no doubt that if it makes proposals that do not meet the investment criteria previously laid down, retribution will be both swift and terrible. The result is that it does not put forward any proposals unless those proposals meet the strictly laid down financial criteria demanded by the Department.

I fear—and I believe that the House fears—that if such procedures are continued into next year, British Rail will once again be found wanting in regard to provision for additional Channel tunnel traffic and certainly in regard to hon. Members representing south of England constituencies. Britain will drown under a tidal wave of heavy goods vehicles.

Either the railway—including the midland main line—is properly equipped to take advantage of the additional traffic likely to be generated in 1993 when the Channel tunnel opens, or it is not. If it is not, I have no doubt that there will be additional pressure for duplicate motorways, for the widening of existing motorways and for even greater expenditure on the building and strengthening of bridges. That again might please the Minister and some of his colleagues, and it will probably delight many of his advisers in the Department of Transport, but I do not think for a moment that such proposals will make him popular with the electorate in the south of England.

Certainly such an approach would do nothing to gear up the north of England and the midland main line as far as Sheffield to enable it to take advantage of the additional traffic generated by the Channel tunnel.

This has been a fascinating debate on a Bill whose total expenditure comes to £7·8 million. I think that the hon. Member for Bosworth spent more than that in five minutes of his 75-minute contribution. It just goes to show that, of course, Conservative Members are in favour of public expenditure restraints—but not when they affect their own constituencies.

9.41 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): It may be helpful at this point if I give a brief indication of the Government's view on the Bill.

The Government have considered the Bill's content, and we have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the board. The Department has only one point outstanding with the Bill's promoters, and I hope that it will be cleared up satisfactorily.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) raised a number of points, particularly on the services provided by British Rail for his constituents. He will appreciate that the London-Sheffield timetable and the scheduling of train services are a commercial matter for British Rail. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) chuckles. Surely he does not really suggest that we in the House should start to draw up the timetables for British Rail's operations. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman made some sensible comments about the use of the House's time for purely constituency suggestions relating to major investment.

Mr. Snape: All that I suggest is that, as the Minister and his Department lay down the financial constraints under which British Rail must operate and tighten those constraints year by year—indeed, reduce the finance available for running British Rail services—he should not complain when I "chuckle", as he puts it, when he tells the House—misleadingly, in my view—that these are matters for British Rail management. He is the man with his fingers on the financial windpipe of British Rail, as we all know.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what has been happening under the present Government. We have been reducing the revenue subsidy to British Rail and increasing investment substantially. The investment figures that have now been approved by Ministers would have made him green with envy had he been a Minister in the previous Government, with responsibility for railways. He knows only too well that, had he been in a position at any time to improve investment on anything remotely approaching the scale on which I have had the privilege to improve it, he would have considered himself a very good friend to British Rail, the railway network, the railway unions and the travelling public. With the new timetables, the last train to Sheffield, at 21.40, is being speeded up by over a quarter of an hour. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam will be delighted with that information.

Mr. Patnick: As I said, the problem is timing. I cannot see how hon. Members can be in the House and vote and still catch a train that went as they passed through the Lobby.

Mr. Mitchell: Next year there will be an additional service to Sheffield at around 11 o'clock in the evening, and that will enable my hon. Friend both to cast his vote and to get back to his constituency.

Mr. Snape: Will the Minister claim credit for that, is it a matter for BR management or, most likely, does it have something to do with the usual channels?

Mr. Mitchell: I assure the hon. Member that I do not claim credit for it. I am merely drawing attention to the fact that this is part of British Rail's plans for the future, and we are debating the British Railways (No. 2) Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) clearly shares my enthusiasm for trains, although I regret that he does not share my enthusiasm for British Rail. He referred to the midland main line as a vital artery, and I wholly agree with him on that. However, he seeks electrification of that line on a number of grounds, some of which are not as firm as he had assumed. For example, he asserted that the high-speed trains that now service that line are 25 years old and clapped out, but that is not the case. They were built in 1975, and while I agree that there are points concerning their reliability which I shall draw to the attention of British Rail, it is not necessarily true that the only way of solving the problem is by scrapping them.

My hon. Friend also asserted that electrification of itself would increase speed. That is untrue. I can illustrate what I mean. The west coast is electrified and the maximum speeds on it are less than the speeds on the east coast main line with high-speed trains.

Mr. Tredinnick: Was I not correct to say that, if the new Electra class 91 locomotives and the mark 4 coaches were introduced on the line from St. Pancras to Leicester and beyond, they would have a dramatic increase in speed? I was not trying to mislead the House.

Mr. Mitchell: I am happy to clarify that point for my hon. Friend. As I have said, the west coast main line, which is electrified, is slightly slower than the east coast main line, which is not electrified. Therefore, it is not true that electrification of itself leads to higher speeds. In the case of the midland main line, the speed limitation is 100 mph and that is a restriction because of the track, the curves and junctions, and because of other such factors. Electrification does not change those limitations and electrifying it would not achieve the purpose that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Snape: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No, let me just finish this point.

My hon. Friend claims that the Electra, which is a 140 mph locomotive, would be faster. There is no point in having a faster engine if it cannot go at its maximum speed. My hon. Friend also asked whether tilting coaches would enable a higher speed to be achieved. He may be right, but tilting coaches do not require electrification. Indeed, he told the House that in 1975 the APT ran from Leicester to London in 58 minutes. However, he did not tell the House that it was not electrified. In fact, it is an illustration of the point that I am making that higher speed does not require electrification. That APT run used a gas turbine engine with two coaches and two power units. All the other traffic

[Mr. Mitchell]

was cleared off the line to give it a free run. I hope that that demonstrates to my hon. Friend that electrification will not necessarily achieve the purposes he has in mind.

Mr. Snape: I hope that the Minister—albeit inadvertently—was not seeking to mislead his hon. Friend. The APT, which alas is in the scrapyard, was electrified eventually and used on the west coast main line. Does the Minister concede that electrification means faster point-to-point timing because of the greater acceleration of electrified locomotives and rolling stock? If diesel trains are just as efficient as electric trains, why have the Government approved the electrification of the east coast main line?

Mr. Mitchell: The decision between electric and diesel involves a careful technical assessment related to very heavy initial outlay on electrification and low operating costs, or low outlay on diesel and high operating costs. Which is the most economical way of providing the service depends upon the frequency of the service and a number of other factors.

I shall return to whether there may be a case for the electrification of the midland main line, but any assessment will not be on the grounds of speed put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth. As I have demonstrated, and as my hon. Friend was kind enough to advise the House, the APT did that run in 58 minutes. It had a gas turbine engine and was not electrified. I understand my hon. Friend's desire for faster, more punctual and more reliable trains. However, before he advocates electrification as a means of achieving that, he needs to assure himself that there are no other more economic means of achieving the same objectives.

There is a somewhat vicarious relationship between the British Railways (No. 2) Bill and the intensity with which we have been discussing this aspect. I understand that my hon. Friend has definite views and ideas, which I hope he will discuss with British Rail. There are facts which, although my hon. Friend may not like them, he should discover, discuss and assess. I suggest that he talks with British Rail. If he is still not satisfied with what it is doing and how it proposes to go about it, my door is always open to my hon. Friend and to other hon. Members who wish to discuss the midland line. When he has spoken to British Rail, I shall be happy to discuss with him any conclusions he might have reached about the midland main line.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East rightly drew us back to the British Railways (No. 2) Bill and asked me some questions. The first concerned the Battersea leisure centre and its rail connection. I understand that the developer formed his own view that rail would enhance the viability of the project. Since the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East and I share an enthusiasm for rail, we can take some delight in that commercial view. The hon. Member also asked me about the four-track lines he would like to see running from Ashford to the Channel tunnel terminal and from Ashford to Waterloo. The lines are judged adequate for the Channel tunnel, but we need to look carefully at the future level of demand, capacity and speed. That is why British Rail is assessing these matters. It is to report to me in June this year.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the speed on that line and to the amount of investment in it. Comparisons are always made with what happens in France, but in France the TGV Nord, that will run from Paris to Calais, is primarily a line that is designed to go from Paris to Brussels and from Brussels to Amsterdam and Cologne. The relatively small section of line that has been constructed between Paris and Calais means that expenditure on Channel tunnel-related matters is very much less than the total expenditure on the TGV Nord. When that is compared with British Rail's expenditure proposals, the difference is not so great as is generally assumed. The fast train services in northern France to the Channel tunnel ride on the back of the Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam-Cologne plans.

The hon. Gentleman wanted to know whether British Rail had put forward proposals and whether they met the Government's criteria. The hon. Gentleman knows that, as from this year, InterCity is operating commercially, thus fulfilling the policies of his party when in government, that travel between major urban centres should not be subsidised. I do not imagine that he will renege on the views of his party when in government. A return of 2·7 per cent. is an exceedingly low requirement.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me whether Britain would be crushed under a load of road vehicles. The Channel tunnel will ensure that an immense amount of freight that would otherwise have gone by road will go by rail.

There is now only one petitioner against the British Railways (No. 2) Bill. He will have an opportunity to present his objections to the Select Committee, which will be in a very much better position than the House to examine in detail the issues involved. It will have the added advantage of expert advice being at its disposal. I recommend that the Bill be given a Second Reading and that it should be allowed to proceed in the usual way to the Select Committee for detailed consideration.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 50.

Division No. 280] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Burns, Simon
Alexander, Richard	Burt, Alistair
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Butcher, John
Allason, Rupert	Butler, Chris
Arbuthnot, James	Butterfill, John
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Atkins, Robert	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Atkinson, David	Carrington, Matthew
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Chapman, Sydney
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Chope, Christopher
Beggs, Roy	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cormack, Patrick
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Couchman, James
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bottomley, Peter	Day, Stephen
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Devlin, Tim
Bowis, John	Dickens, Geoffrey
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Dorrell, Stephen
Brazier, Julian	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bright, Graham	Dover, Den
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Dunn, Bob
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Durant, Tony
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Budgen, Nicholas	Fallon, Michael

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson
and Mr. Michael Colvin.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Farr, Sir John
Faulds, Andrew
Foulkes, George
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ingram, Adam
Knowles, Michael
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Ruddock, Joan
Snape, Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tredinnick, David
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put accordingly and agreed to.
Bill read a Second time and committed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Licensing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Orders of the Day

Licensing Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

PERMITTED HOURS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 11, at end insert—

"( ) In section 60(1)(b) of the principal Act (permitted hours in licensed premises on Sundays etc.), for the words "five hours beginning at two" there shall be submitted the words "four hours beginning at three"."

10.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment extends Sunday opening by one hour. It is right that I should re-emphasise to the House that, on previous occasions, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I made it clear that it was not the Government's intention to extend licensing hours on Sunday. The reasons that we put forward were never reasons of principle. They were always conceded to be pragmatic reasons. We wanted to make it plain, and we made it plain to the House, that our objective in giving that assurance was to reconcile as many as possible to the passage of the Bill. That was a candidly stated reason. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members below the Bar of the House not participating in the debate kindly leave the Chamber or come and join us?

Mr. Hogg: I was reminding the House about the Government's position on this amendment when the matter was last before the House. However, when the amendment was discussed in another place, the Government were unable to persuade their Lordships to take a similar view. Consequently, the amendment was carried in the other place. The question that we now must decide is whether the Government should seek to persuade the House to try to reverse that amendment.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Minister aware that some hon. Members are not particularly bothered one way or the other in relation to the extension of hours for Sundays? However, is the Minister aware that some of us are extremely concerned that the amendment appears to deal only with public houses? It does not appear to deal with the important matter of members' clubs. Will the Minister immediately clarify the position? Does the amendment relate only to pubs and ignore clubs?

Mr. Hogg: As the hon. Gentleman has raised the question, I shall certainly deal with it, but I hope that he will forgive me if I deal with it at the conclusion of my remarks rather than straight away.

I was saying that the question that now arises is whether the House should seek to reverse the amendment that was accepted in another place. The suggestion that I make to the House is that we should not. In all conscience, I cannot say that the amendment that was passed in the other place was wrong in principle. I do not believe that it is wrong in principle. Moreover, it clearly meets a genuine demand. It is modest. Having regard to those three considerations, it seems to me to be nonsense to invite the House to disagree with the amendment. It is on that basis that I recommend that we agree with the amendment.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) raised a question about clubs. The amendment does not apply to clubs. I do not recommend that the House should enlarge clubs' opening hours to parallel what has been done to pub opening hours. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?] I was in the process of explaining the two reasons why not. First, while the licensing regime as a whole applies to public houses, it does not apply to clubs. There is therefore no powerful reason why a relaxation in the licensing regime for pubs should automatically apply to clubs, unless clubs were to accept that the full body of the licensing law should apply to them, which is not a concession that they are willing to make.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): For a long time, pubs and clubs have enjoyed the same total number of opening hours, so why should we now be asked to differentiate?

Mr. Hogg: I was reciting two reasons why we should differentiate. I shall repeat the first reason because it is important. The licensing regime that applies to pubs does not apply to clubs. Unless clubs are prepared to accept, as a principle, that the entire licensing regime that now applies to pubs should also apply to them, I can see no compelling reason for treating the two the same.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I shall give way after I have finished my second point.

With regard to Sunday opening hours, the other place thought that there was a justification for extending what was generally regarded as the lunch-time hour on Sundays. As the House will know, clubs already have the facility to extend their opening hours to 3 o'clock. Therefore, under present law, clubs can do precisely what the other place decided pubs should be able to do.

Mr. Cunliffe: The Minister is attempting to quantify and qualify a principle. Will he now tell the House that clubs are permitted to open only for five and a half hours on a Sunday, compared with pubs, which are allowed to open for six and a half hours? There is a clear anomaly of one hour which discriminates against clubs. Will the Minister give the House a straight answer?

Mr. Hogg: Whatever else I can be criticised for, it is not for not giving a straight answer. The hon. Gentleman may not like the answer, but nobody could say that it was incomprehensible or other than straight. He may not like it, but the reasons are as I have stated them to be.

I shall repeat the first reason, because the hon. Gentleman obviously failed to understand it. The licensing laws that apply to public houses do not apply to clubs. It is curious that clubs say that on the one hand they should be treated more favourably than public houses, but on the other that they should be given exactly the same hours. Either they agree to the licensing regime being applied to them in its totality or they accept that, from time to time, there may be differences.

While it is perfectly true that under the proposal, if we accept it, there will be a difference between the total opening hours available to pubs and clubs, the narrow question considered in the other place was whether on Sundays pubs should be able to remain open until 3 o'clock. Under existing law, clubs are already able to do that.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The Minister will be aware that the differences between the licensing procedures of clubs and pubs have existed for many years and that pubs and clubs have been allowed the same number of hours. Will he explain why there should now be a difference in the total number of hours they are allowed?

Mr. Hogg: We come back to our starting point. The licensing laws in the more significant respects have always made a distinction between clubs and pubs. That is a distinction which clubs which to see perpetuated. Sometimes it works in their favour, and sometimes it does not. The narrow point that we are considering is whether we should relax the licensing hours for Sunday lunchtime by one hour. Clubs already have the capacity to do that, but pubs have not. The other place decided that an extension of one hour should be made for a Sunday, which is something that clubs can already do.

For the reasons that I have outlined, I commend the amendment to the House.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The Minister has given us an amazing account of the reasons why he has now changed his mind completely and is saying that we should accept the amendment. His speech was an attempt to justify the unjustifiable and to stand on its head all that the Government have previously said about this matter. His logic was an attempt to reconcile irreconcilable differences. His exchange with my hon. Friends proves that Labour Members, and, I suspect, some Conservative Members, know far more about the realities of licensing law for clubs and pubs than he does.

There are several reasons why this amendment creates difficulties. It goes back on all the previous promises that the Government have given on licensing laws. When the Bill was published, when we debated the issue on Second Reading, and when we discussed it in detail in Committee and on Report, the Minister and, indeed, the Home Secretary made it clear that there would be no change in the rules for Sundays. They said clearly that that was a matter for Sunday trading legislation, and it would have been better if the Government had left it at that.

The Government have behaved badly. I hope that the House is aware of exactly what went on in another place when the amendment was discussed. In another place the Minister, Earl Ferrers, said that amendments of this kind to extend drinking on Sunday should not be accepted, and he acknowledged that one of the reasons was that there would be difficulty in this House. When the amendment was moved in the other place the Government did not vote against it. The amendment went through on the nod, despite all previous assurances.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will the hon. Lady concede that she and her hon. Friends are worried that the Government are doing something that will be immensely popular? Yet again, the Opposition are out of step with public opinion and she is now trying to cover that up.

Mrs. Taylor: I should have thought that Conservative Members would be worried that the Government were going back on assurances given to the House and the Committee on numerous occasions. I hope that the Minister will tell us whether it was an act of deliberate Government policy to insert this measure into the Bill or whether the measure went through by accident because their Lordships were not paying attention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It was not an act of deliberate Government policy—*[Interruption.]* I heard the sedentary intervention. It was inadvertence. There are two explanations. One is conspiracy, and the other is cock-up. *[Interruption.]* It was cock-up.

Mrs. Taylor: Having served in the Whips' Office, I am quite willing to believe in a cock-up by the Government rather than the conspiracy theory.

Now that this amendment has gone through the other place and we are faced with it this evening, we have to consider the problems that it creates. It should create problems in terms of honour on the part of the Government, who have given us these assurances. However, if we put those on one side, it does create other difficulties as well. First, it creates difficulties for those people who work in public houses. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who tabled an amendment, will wish to go into this in some detail, but the licensed house managers, USDAW, and other unions that represent people employed in this industry are extremely worried.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The hon. Member is arguing that public houses, by opening for an extra hour on Sundays, could cause problems for employees. Will she tell us whether the Opposition's policy is to shut all public houses for all of Sunday?

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) knows better than that. Having looked at the Bill in detail, I should have thought that he would have some concern for those people—especially husband and wife teams—who run many of our public houses and will be under considerable pressure from extended opening hours. Some people will be facing far longer working hours. As the Minister acknowledged in Committee, the brewers will be pressing managers to open all permitted hours. Proper agreements will not be reached between the brewers and the managers, and there will be extreme pressure on those people who work in the industry.

This morning I received a letter from someone in Cardiff, saying that no one has thought of the landlord. Sunday is the only time when the landlord and his family can go out or put their feet up for a well earned rest. Many families run pubs together, and we should be thinking of them. I am sure that my hon. Friends will wish to pursue that point.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does the hon. Lady not understand that the best time for any publican is Sunday lunchtime? It is family time and it is a very social time for visitors. Each publican wishes his cost centre—his pub—to be profitable. Therefore, it is an essential time for a publican. I think that the hon. Lady may be wrong when she is singing the case of the publican not wanting to work Sundays. Most publicans to whom I have spoken would welcome that extra hour, because of their profit centre.

Mrs. Taylor: I am glad to say that most publicans serve beer rather than tea, but that is another matter. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) gives an example of what Conservative Members think the Bill is all about. He mentioned profitability. That is all that the brewers are worried about. That is why we have the Bill. We should consider those who work in the industry. The husband and wife team is worthy of some consideration. I shall refer to the point about families later. That is another problem that the Bill will create.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I have some sympathy with what the hon. Lady says about employees in public houses. However, I do not think that we on this side can expect the Labour party to go overboard for this amendment because of its links with the trade union movement. Employees in public houses are in a collective negotiating position with the brewers. They will not accept extra work on Sundays without having agreed with the brewers their terms of employment for the extra hour that they will be asked to work. As it has been conservatively estimated that about 50,000 additional jobs could be generated by the Bill to which we are about to give our blessing, could the hon. Lady be a little more bullish about supporting what, in essence, is a good job-creation measure?

10.30 pm

Mrs. Taylor: I did not realise that the Bill was being put forward as a job-creation measure. I thought that it was the pay-off to the brewers for their contributions during the last election. Be that as it may, the hon. Gentleman is forgetting the many difficulties that arise at present with the arbitration procedure between licensed house managers and the brewers. The managers have very little on their side. We have seen examples during the past 12 months of pub managers being badly treated by the brewers, but having little that they can do about it. Many managers have had a bad time at the hands of the arbitration system and that has created many difficulties. That is one problem that is created by the amendment.

Another problem is the anomaly that is now being created between clubs and pubs. Several of my hon. Friends will wish to speak about that. It is strange that the Minister should say that it will be perfectly all right to stay in a pub for an extra hour, but not in a working men's club. In Committee we discussed at some length the provisions of working men's clubs and the ways in which they organise their affairs. At that stage the Minister was sympathetic to the view that many working men's clubs exercise far more control over drinking than do many pubs. The committee members of many clubs play an active role in ensuring that the atmosphere in their clubs is proper and that drinking to excess does not occur. I am glad that some Conservative Members agree with me.

I hope that the Minister will reconsider that point and tell us that he intends to do something about the anomaly that is being created. The present safeguards for the clubs do not create equality. The flexibility that is now being given to pubs will not apply to clubs. Therefore, the Minister is accepting a strange anomaly. I am surprised that, having once accepted the extension for public houses in another place, the Government should put the Whips in against clubs in this way.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is the hon. Lady saying that, if we agree with the Lords in the amendment, at a later stage she would agree with a measure to bring the clubs into line?

Mrs. Taylor: We have not yet agreed to this measure, but, if it were to go through, I see no reason why clubs should not be treated in exactly the same way as pubs. However, we should think about certain considerations before we get to that stage. We should consider the whole principle of extending drinking hours on Sunday.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth seems to have turned his attention from other matters and is now talking about the advantages to the family of having Sunday drinking. I know that some families like to go out for a meal at Sunday lunchtime—occasionally I do that myself—but we do not need to extend Sunday drinking time to do that. The restaurants, or restaurants attached to public houses, to which families go will have a restaurant licence. If they are serving food, they do not need this extension.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does the hon. Lady agree that the Bill which Viscount Montgomery initiated in another place and which became an Act last year has given restaurants and pubs with restaurants a distinct advantage over those pubs which serve bar meals, often at competitive prices, and that that discriminates against pubs which could be part of the Sunday lunchtime family thing?

Mrs. Taylor: There may be some special pleading in that.

I return to the principle involved here. Is this the best use of families' Sunday lunchtime? I know that there are people who think that extra hours at Sunday lunchtime will create more problems than they will solve. Families who want to go out with children to have a meal on Sundays have enough time now. We do not need to extend drinking time in order to help them.

This measure is the thin end of the wedge. The Minister and the Government have allowed a back-door extension of Sunday opening and taken a serious step in that direction. They are tricking the House into extending Sunday opening times without thinking of the problems and difficulties that will be created. The problem is not as simple as the Minister thinks. Perhaps it was the Government's incompetence that led to this measure, but it is a dangerous step to take. The Government are foolish to accept the Lords amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Sir Bernard Braine.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Father of the House to abuse his position to be called early in this sort of debate to put forward his narrow-minded prejudices on this subject?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Sir Bernard Braine.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): For the benefit of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), I should say that I spent about nine years as chairman of the National Council on Alcoholism. This is a subject upon which I have spoken fairly frequently in the House, and about which I feel passionately. In a moment the hon. Gentleman will understand why, if he has the capacity to listen.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I rise to express my dismay and regret that the Government have agreed to accept an amendment that will permit an extra drinking hour on Sundays. I recognise that the Government have been subjected to intense pressure about this by the vested interests concerned. None the less, this is a concession that should not be made, and I hope to give the House the reason why.

First, there is no evidence of majority public support for extending drinking hours on Sundays. The evidence from opinion polls suggests, on the contrary, that the majority of the public would prefer Sunday opening hours to remain as they are. By accepting the amendment the Government are bowing, not to public demand, but to the demand of vested interests. The game was given away——

Mr. Foulkes: Will the right hon. Gentleman consult his hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is sitting about 2 yd from him? The licensing laws in Scotland have changed and are now much more civilised throughout the week—not only on Sundays. Experience in Scotland has been that there is much less drunkenness and aggravation, and much more civilised drinking. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not learn from the experience of Scotland and from his hon. Friend, and use that knowledge in England for once?

Sir Bernard Braine: This debate is not about Scotland. If it were, I would show how alcohol harm had increased there. If the hon. Gentleman chooses to intervene, he should make sure of his facts. He is only making me more than ever determined to place the facts before the House.

The Government promised not to tinker with Sundays, and they intended to stick to that, but there was an error in another place. The right formula was not uttered at the right time. The result is that a "cock-up"—that is the term that my hon. Friend used—is now being made into a virtue.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): As the Father of the House, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that he has listened to many Ministers commending amendments from another place, but he has never heard a Minister argue in favour of an amendment on the grounds that it was unprincipled, inadvertent and a cock-up? Surely they are good reasons for rejecting it.

Sir Bernard Braine: I must confess that I have never heard such an argument before.

Mr. Cunliffe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This evening I approached Mr. Speaker and I asked him whether I could use the phrase "cock-up" in this debate. Mr. Speaker is a member of the all-party non-profit making clubs association that I represent. He replied, "No, I do not think that it would be in order." The Minister has used those words, as has the Father of the House and the Liberal leader. I accept the Queensberry Rules, but if it is permissible for certain distinguished Members of the House to use that phrase, I claim the same privilege for the contribution that I shall make.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If those words were used too often, I believe that our debates would become somewhat inelegant.

Sir Bernard Braine: I entirely agree and I promise faithfully not to use that phrase again. I cannot promise not to refer to the inadvertence that led to the amendment being accepted in the other place, contrary to the Government's intentions.

I praise my hon. Friend for his honesty and the integrity that I know he possesses. I acquit him of any share of the blame for what happened in the other place. He may go there one day, but for the time being he is here and he has no responsibility for what happened. I am only sorry that he has to defend the indefensible.

My hon. Friend has claimed that the concession that has been made is so limited in scope—just one hour—as to be entirely innocuous. That claim lacks all credibility. Indeed, it is no more than the Government's version of the housemaid's proverbial excuse for her baby, namely, that illegitimacy does not matter because the baby is such a little one. The amendment matters a great deal.

Let us consider the likely effect of one hour's extra drinking time on local residents on a Sunday. If the amendment is carried, they will have to tolerate additional disturbance during what, for many, is the only afternoon during which they can enjoy peace and quiet with their families. Let us consider the likely effects on the existing problems of drinking and driving, and public disorder linked with alcoholic consumption. I believe—we have it on the authority of my hon. Friend—that, because of the relatively more restricted licensing regime, extended drinking hours are likely to result in more alcohol consumption on a Sunday than on other days of the week.

Mr. Foulkes: Rubbish.

Sir Bernard Braine: If it is rubbish, it was said by my hon. Friend in Committee.

If consumption increases, it is clear that alcohol-related problems, such as public disorder and the mayhem that flows from drinking and driving will also increase. Some football fixtures are held on Sundays, in preference to Saturdays, to reduce the likelihood of alcohol-fuelled disturbances. If the present more tranquil and peaceful atmosphere of Sunday afternoons is impaired by the amendment, it will turn out to be a mixed blessing.

I am amused at how the advocates of the drink trade pour scorn on the idea that such a little extension of drinking on a Sunday will do harm. They believe that it will add to the enjoyment of living. No doubt this will be so in remote villages and in the genteel suburbs, but the reality for much of the country is different.

10.45 pm

I shall limit myself to just one recent report in *The Times* of 25 April. It is a chilling report, because it shows that what is happening in inner cities is now invading the shires. *[Interruption.]* If it takes place on a Saturday, it will take place on Sunday as well. Let me quote from the report:

> "Police warnings that outbreaks of violent disorder normally associated with deprived inner-city areas were increasingly being seen in small towns were borne out at the weekend . . . 300 youths fought with police in Carlisle, Cumbria. Five officers, including a woman police constable, needed hospital treatment.
>
> The violence was repeated on a smaller scale in towns in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey and Hampshire . . . 'The common denominator'"—

said the spokesman for the Police Federation—

> "'seems to be people drinking far too much and then turning on the police with a viciousness which is particularly nasty

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when policewomen are involved. The pattern is for people to take part in mob rioting with no feeling that there will be any retribution'."

This was just over one weekend.

"Ten youths were arrested in Reading, Berkshire, after fighting broke out at a private party in a public house . . .In Alton, Hampshire, a woman was attacked with a broken glass during a brawl involving about 25 men in a public house."

So it goes on. Those of use who are in close touch with our constituencies know that this sort of thing is on the increase. Before the little inadvertence in the other place, the Government knew that it was wrong to extend licensing by this amount of time on a Sunday.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is fully aware of all this. He is not here tonight, but I will still say this. Having seen the Bill leave the House to go to the other place, I was amazed to read his comments on the occasion of the Robert Peel anniversary in the midlands on 5 February, when he said openly:

"In dozens of our cities and market towns up and down the shires, we have seen disturbances caused largely by youth who were white, employed, affluent and drunk."

Those are the words of the Home Secretary, not my words; I have not thought them out. How can my right hon. Friend say that and then, because of the failure of a Whip in the other place to maintain the Government's position on Sunday opening, condone that failure and break the Government's pledge to many of us in this House not to interfere with Sundays? Does my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State not feel that granting extra time on Sunday afternoon will add to the problems outlined in the Tamworth speech of the Home Secretary?

We are told that extra drinking hours are needed for the convenience of those who want to enjoy a pub lunch on Sunday. It is a delightful idea, but how do they get to and from the pub if not by car? [HON. MEMBERS: "Walk."] I am talking, not about the pleasant Chiltern village, but about the towns and places where disorder already takes place. How do they get to the pub if not by car? There is very little public transport available on Sunday afternoon. In the other place the point was conceded by the Lord Harmar-Nicholls, who said:

"I know that in the part of the country . . . where I . . . live. Sunday is a day when people go to the pub in a family group more than they do during the week . . . our neighbours, as well as ourselves, as a family get into the motor car and travel into the country to have a drink in a country pub".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 494, c. 1040]

Thousands will get into cars to do so. The amendment is designed to encourage that practice. There is nothing wrong with it, provided only that the driver himself does not drink. However, the reality is that the amendment will encourage the very pattern of behaviour that the Department of Transport wishes to discourage. How do the Government propose to avert that danger?

The sentiments of the amendment are directly contrary to the assurance given by the Government about the scope of the Bill. Sunday drinking hours were excluded from the Government's consultative document. Time and again Ministers have explicitly stated that they did not regard the Bill as a means of altering Sunday trading laws. They may claim now that they were careful to leave themselves a let-out by stating that their objections to extended drinking hours were of a pragmatic nature. Those were words used by my hon. Friend the Minister at the Dispatch Box today. However carefully Ministers may have worded their statements, and however carefully my hon. Friend worded his announcement this evening, the fact remains that they were taken to mean that Sundays would be excluded from the provisions of the Bill. It was only on that basis that some people gave it their support.

The House should not run away with the idea that licensees are enthusiastic about the proposal in question. I totally disagree with my hon. Friend, and I am sorry to say so, because I am very fond of him.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend concede that we live in a different world today and that on a Saturday youngsters can obtain a case of beer, throw it into the boot of their car, and drink it wherever they like on Sunday? Is that not more likely to lead to drunkenness and disorder on a Sunday than an extension of pub licensing hours?

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend is most helpful, because he may know that the Government's OPCS survey on the drinking habits of young people from the age of 13 onwards revealed that the majority of them had their first drinks in public houses. We have a scourge of under-age drinking in this country, which alarms publicans. They hate it; they cannot control it. It is a growing problem. If my hon. Friend will consult the police, they will tell him that there is a link between under-age drinking and fracas outside public houses and in city centres.

The House ought not to shut its eyes to reality. Last month I received a letter from Mr. John Madden, the general secretary of the National Association of Licensed House Managers, which represents public house managers throughout the country. He wrote:

"I have been made aware that the House of Lords have accepted an amendment which if agreed would allow pubs to stay open till 3 p.m. on Sundays. Although this Association did not press for changes in the Licensing Act 1964 we gave the Home Secretary's proposal to amend the Act qualified support. The support was forthcoming because of the Government's intention not to change the Sunday trading hours. Although the proposed change in Sunday trading may appear to be a modest one the Association is of the view that it would only be a matter of time before the afternoon break would disappear, so changing the special character of Sunday. When the Bill returns to the House of Commons I would be grateful if you would bear in mind the Association's opposition to any change in Sunday trading hours."

It is my duty to convey to the House the view of a large number of those who manage public houses in this country.

I should like to know whether the amendment is being accepted by the Government in the hope that by doing so they will forestall any further attempts to relax Sunday trading laws more extensively. Or is it the case, as the association fears, that the amendment is the thin end of the wedge? One is entitled to ask that question. In view of the fact that to accept the amendment will be to renege on assurances previously given, the Government are under a considerable duty to make absolutely clear their intentions. Many of us in the House, and in the country, will be satisfied with nothing less than an unequivocal guarantee that the amendment will be the end of the matter in regard to Sunday opening.

Finally, the amendment throws into even sharper relief the need for effective counter-measures against drinking and driving. The Government now have the recommendations of the Road Traffic Law Review Committee, chaired by Dr. Peter North, including the recommendation:

"The licensing authorities should be able to take into account, when considering whether to renew a licence, any

evidence that the licensee had regularly or persistently served alcohol to customers who went on to commit drink drive offences."

I suggest that a provision to that effect could and should have been included in the Bill, certainly now that extra drinking time is to be provided on Sundays as well as weekdays. As the House will know, the afternoon break has been abolished. Recently the New Zealand authorities pointed to that break as one reason why there was more sobriety in Britain than on the continent and decided to introduce it in New Zealand—at the very moment when the Government decided to abolish it here.

Mr. Favell: How does my right hon. Friend bear out what he has just said—that the English are a sober race, or considered to be on the continent—when we hear of nothing but drunkenness in holiday resorts abroad?

Sir Bernard Braine: That is a good question. Indeed, one of my greatest fears has always been that if we are not careful we shall have the same degree of alcohol harm here as there is on the continent. Twice as many people are killed on the roads in alcohol-related incidents in France as in this country, but the figure here is still very damaging. Whereas in France 40 per cent. of acute beds are occupied by people suffering from alcohol-related disease, the figure in this country is now only about 20 per cent. I do not say that the extra hour's drinking will change that, but in the abolition of the afternoon break—this latest move, this breaking of the word—we can see a reckless drive down the road that has brought so much misery to our continental neighbours.

Now that extra drinking time is to be provided on Sundays as well as on weekdays, the need to take strong measures is even more urgent than before. Paradoxically—and here I compliment the Government—the success of their economic policies in increasing affluence means, inevitably, that consumption will increase. That is what the trade wants: it wants to sell more liquor. Profits will increase, and that is all in order. Economic growth is involved, and so on, but we know for a fact that with every increase in consumption there is an increase in harm. That pattern can be seen not only in Britain but in the Soviet Union and the United States. No wonder the World Health Organisation has called on all member states to reduce their consumption of alcohol by at least 25 per cent. by 1995. This puny little measure is the only answer that the Government give to that challenge.

All that I say is that the nation has been warned by the royal colleges. It has been warned by the medical profession. It has been warned, repeatedly, that the harm from alcohol consumption rises with consumption itself. If the Government do not learn that lesson, God help us.

Mr. Cunliffe: First, let me declare not a pecuniary interest, but an interest, in that I share with the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) the joint chairmanship of the all-party association of non-profit-making clubs, which, I am proud to say, represents 181 Members of Parliament and nine Members of the other place.

At the beginning of the debate, we saw a classic illustration of a Minister coming to the Dispatch Box and telling the House that he could qualify the principle established in the Bill—or in the part that I shall consider specifically tonight—and then trying in one sentence to blow the bugles of advance and to cover the retreat of the other place and the Government of the day. At a later stage, he confesses to the House—to use unparliamentary words—that there was a blunder of the first magnitude, to describe it discreetly, by those in the other place and by those in charge of the Administration. I say that as someone who has spent seven years in the Whips' Office.

11 pm

Clause 1 now has a blatant anomaly, which discriminates in a way that is indefensibly unfair. It says that one can have a public exclusive right, based on citizenship, to enjoy, within the public house domain, the privilege of an extra hour's drinking time on Sunday. That is clear, regardless of what Ministers have said in this House and in the other place. This privilege is denied to clubs because, although they can open from 12 to 3 o'clock, in the evening they can open only from 7 o'clock to 9.30.

The Minister may ask why the clubs should have that privilege. It is because, on a £100 million turnover, they pay £15 million in VAT. They are registered patrons and make a contribution to the Exchequer and to society as a whole. From the village, bowling and horticultural clubs to the Conservative and Liberal clubs, a whole galaxy——

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): What about Labour clubs?

Mr. Cunliffe: I am coming to that. My hon. Friend is a notable Labour club leader and will speak for himself on that. We do not publicly cross domains.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: If this amendment is so discrimatory as against clubs, why is it that nobody, on behalf of the clubs—for example, the hon. Gentleman—has tabled an amendment to include clubs?

Mr. Cunliffe: At the end of my speech, I shall be posing to the Minister a question that will be relevant to that point.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Would it not have been far better if, instead of asking my hon. Friend to table an amendment, the Government had resisted the Lords amendment, thereby maintaining the status quo?

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Cunliffe: I shall not. That would be the third intervention from the hon. Gentleman this evening, and the Government are responsible for their legislation. He should wait to make his own speech.

I can illustrate the cant and hypocrisy of the Minister in the other place, who clearly stated:

"I am bound to say that I have a sneaking sympathy because the whole philosophy behind this Bill is that it should not interfere with Sundays."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 April 1988; Vol. 495, c. 1183.]

My argument is against the anomaly that the Government are creating. The amendment not only discriminates but segregates, penalises and takes away privileges from the private registered clubs. The Prime Minister recently sent to the annual conference of the Club and Institute Union a message of congratulation on its 125th anniversary, pinpointing the exceptional work that it had done in the past century and a quarter. It embellishes the record of the behavioural pattern of clubs. To a large degree, clubs do not deal with disorderly factions; the track record of the vast majority of clubs

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bears no comparison with the incidents that have taken place in public houses. Under the clause, patrons of registered clubs inevitably will become second-class citizens in terms of rights and privileges.

Mr. Colvin: As the hon. Member for Leith (Mr. Cunliffe) has gone back in history to the start of the working men's club movement, will he acknowledge that in the CIU's initial constitution, which was written in 1926, the object of the clubs was to provide places where working men could meet, "free from intoxicating drinks"? The clubs have come a long way since then, but that is not necessarily an argument for having the licensing hours for clubs exactly the same as for pubs.

Mr. Cunliffe: That is the essence of the working classes of the day. The great Earl of Rosebery was a patron. Starting with the clerics, it was meant to bridle, inhibit and restrain working-class people from enjoying some of the fruits of their production. Eventually, the coin was reversed. That is what we call democratic evolution, and it has worked extremely well.

The association, of which I am proud to be joint chairman, has 10 million members and 33,000 registered clubs, and it turns over to the Exchequer hundreds of millions of pounds a year because of the service that it renders.

The argument is not whether alcohol is good or bad for people. I take the view that, no matter what the Minister may say this evening, there is no doubt that the Ministers, both here and in the other place, in trying to solve what they considered to be old problems, have inevitably created new ones. The administration of this Government have gone from blunder to blunder. They are inept. They cannot maintain the discipline that is expected by a policy that is sane and fair.

We are not asking for extra hours for clubs. We want only the basic equity that we now have. We shall say that again, and we may very well vote on it this evening.

I shall ask the Minister one final question. He has now admitted that there is an injustice and an anomaly within the clause. In view of the formidable representations that will be made by millions of people, will he consider with a degree of fairness a one-clause Bill to be initiated in another place? What would be his response to an attempt to correct a serious anomaly which is—I shall not use the Minister's words—a blunder of the first magnitude?

Mr. Couchman: I shall detain the House for only a few minutes at this time of night. First, I declare once again, as I have at all points during the progress of the Bill through the House, my vested interest as a multiple licensee and as the majority shareholder in a company which runs five public houses in London.

On Second Reading and on Report, I suggested to the Government that if they had been prepared to take on board the suggestion of extending Sunday lunchtime for a little while, they would be acknowledging a practice which is already prevalent in London and which, in any case, would add to the enjoyment of Sunday lunchtime by many families.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said, Sunday lunchtime is one of the sessions that licensees enjoy. I ran a big public house in London for four years, and I certainly enjoyed it. But a session between 12 o'clock and 2 o'clock is very brief. Many will welcome the sensible extension from 2 o'clock to 3 o'clock that their Lordships have written into the Bill. It will help to restore the balance between restaurants and pubs that have restaurants attached to them that serve Sunday lunch. More families now go out to Sunday lunch——

Mr. Hoyle: It is about profits.

Mr. Couchman: Of course it is about profits, and that is nothing to be ashamed of; pub hours could be extended at times when public houses would serve nothing and when it would not be worth their while to open.

What harm would it do if families with children over 14 were allowed into public houses to enjoy a bar meal, representing good value for money, and if they were able to linger over their Sunday lunch until 3 o'clock? The apocalyptic vision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) will not come to pass.

I should have preferred Sunday lunchtime to be extended from 11 o'clock to 3 o'clock, but if it is to be extended from midday until 3 o'clock I do not believe that the question of licensing hours will return to the House for quite a long time. It will satisfy those who want a drink with their Sunday lunch. It will also satisfy the trade and the wicked brewers. I am a tenant of the wicked brewer landlords. It will not cause immense damage or harm to the fabric of society and it will remove the licensing issue from this House for probably a decade. If the extension had been from 11 o'clock to 3 o'clock, I suspect that it would probably have removed it for all time.

I ask the House to give the amendment a fair trial and to vote for it tonight. I sympathise with the point made by the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe). It will create a difference between pubs and clubs that is probably undesirable. However, the clubs fought publicans. They wanted to install jackpot fruit machines and to enjoy that privilege over public houses.

Mr. John Evans: The proceeds of a fruit machine in a public house go to the tenant or to the brewer. The proceeds of a fruit machine in a club are returned to the members.

Mr. Couchman: It is the profits of fruit machines in clubs that allow their members to drink so cheaply. That is a very large raison d'être for clubs. But that is by the by, and I was perhaps unwise to mention fruit machines.

I should have looked favourably on an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Leigh that would have put clubs on all fours with pubs in that respect. It is a very poor reason to oppose the amendment because clubs, in the hon. Gentleman's eyes, are discriminated against by their Lordships' amendment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point suggests to people who may oppose other measures in which he is interested that, by giving those measures a fair wind, they may be taken off the agenda. My right hon. Friend knows of the legislation to which I refer. I hope that he will give this Bill a fair wind, as I hope he gets a fair wind for those measures for which he has an aspiration. I encourage hon. Members to agree with their Lordships.

11.15 pm

Mr. Hoyle: I, too shall declare an interest, but not a profitable one. I speak, I hope, for the National

Association of Licensed House Managers, which has an interest in the debate. The Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), read out a letter from the association's general secretary. Account should be taken of that association's views.

NALHM regards Sunday as a special occasion. Its members work hard all week. The break on Sunday is precious to them and their staff. It enables them to enjoy Sunday with their families. They oppose any measure to take one hour off them. The Minister knows full well that the NALHM agreed, with some reluctance, to changes in the licensing hours, on the understanding that there would be no change for Sunday or bank holidays.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Castle Point that this is the thin end of the wedge. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that he would have preferred the opening hours to be from 11 o'clock. It would go from 11, to 10 to 9 o'clock, until the break began to disappear. People will not be satisfied with what has happened.

Mr. Couchman: That is not right.

Mr. Hoyle: If the hon. Gentleman disagrees, I shall give him every opportunity to rise.

Mr. Couchman: I suggested on Second Reading that a more suitable amendment would provide for opening between 11 and 3 o'clock because many licensees in London and elsewhere already take a liberty with licensing hours. I do not in any way, shape or form condone their actions. They open because there is demand. There is a demand from people who do not necessarily want to go to church and who would like to be able to have a drink on a Sunday morning from 11 o'clock rather than from midday. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to my speech on Second Reading. I do not wish to see Sunday as an ordinary day of the week. I remember when Sunday afternoon was a welcome break.

Mr. Hoyle: I know that I made a mistake in giving way. We have just heard a speech. I hope that the pubs in which the hon. Gentleman has an interest are not breaking the law.

Mr. Meale: All five of them.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes. I shall allow the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) to see whether his pubs are breaking the law this coming Sunday. That does not excuse what is happening to the staff. The hon. Gentleman has confirmed my worst belief, that my fear is justified. Having achieved this little extra hour, some licensees will come back for more. It is the old theme of profit for the brewers.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: Yes, but only because the hon. Gentleman is a near neighbour, and for no other reason. The hour is late, but I shall give way.

Mr. Butler: I suggest that profit is important to both our constituencies. We both have breweries in our constituencies. The hon. Gentleman has Tetley Walker and I have Greenall Whitley. Should they not be allowed to make a profit?

Mr. Hoyle: If the hon. Gentleman knew a little more about our constituencies, he would know that I have Burtonwood too. I have been under no pressure from either to say that the licensing hours should be increased. I am speaking for the staff who work in those pubs controlled by Greenall Whitley, Tetley, Burtonwood and others, because they deserve to be spoken for. If we do not speak for them here, no one else will speak for them. Many Conservative Members will speak for the brewers and we shall no doubt hear from them later.

The Minister has behaved like Mr. Chad by getting down in his seat so that we can only see his nose peeping over the Dispatch Box. The Government have ratted on a promise made in good faith. The Minister is very uncomfortable and I am not sure whether he went along with that. It is the second U-turn by the Government today because of the pressure put upon them.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a fundamental difference between the U-turn carried out by the Government this afternoon and tonight's U-turn because the latter is in accord with what the Government wanted all along? Home Office Ministers made it clear from the start that they favoured complete liberalisation on a Sunday and only what they called pragmatic reasons prevented them from accepting it and induced them to give that promise which, for whatever reasons, is not now being honoured. The Government are therefore yielding to something that they wanted all the time.

Mr. Hoyle: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is not a matter of principle; it is a pragmatic arrangement. Many people who went along with the rule now feel badly let down. It is a disgraceful episode.

I have never seen the Minister look more uncomfortable than when he was trying to explain why the Government were not opposing the measure. He used a phrase which, because of your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to use, although it aptly describes the situation.

The Father of the House was right when he said that many of us have gone along with the proposal on the understanding that Sundays and bank holidays would not be interfered with, although the Minister does not go along with that. We now fear the worst because what has been done can happen again. It is important that we speak for the staff, many of whom are badly paid and poorly represented. The house managers have a difficult time in their negotiations with the brewers on such matters, as I have explained to the Minister. Pressure will be on those people all the time and it is a shame that we are eating into Sunday, which the country regards as a special day. Those people work long hours, are dedicated to their jobs and try to run their houses in the best way.

My hon. Friends are right to feel aggrieved when they speak for the pubs. One of the points that has not been made but which should be taken into account is that, because of the anomalies, people may go from clubs to pubs and may drive a motor vehicle to obtain that extra drink. That is where the danger lies.

The Minister suggested to my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) that he should table an amendment as a remedy, but the Government should have tabled an amendment to remove the provision made by the House of Lords to return to the status quo, that both clubs

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and pubs should open for the same length of time. That makes a great deal of sense, but the alternative will lead to chaos, anomalies, accidents and a loss of life. When there were "dry" and "wet" counties in Wales, people would cross the border to obtain an extra drink. That will happen on a Sunday lunchtime. We are being asked to take a retrograde step. It is a step in the wrong direction and one that is not welcomed by the managements and staffs of public houses.

Mr. Greg Knight: I disagree with most of the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), but I find that my support for the amendment is lukewarm because it does not go far enough. I have no difficulty in accepting that pubs should be allowed to open for an extra hour on Sundays. Licensees must be adjudged by the courts to be fit and proper persons, and I believe that they should be allowed to open their pubs as and when they choose. I accept, however, that that is not the issue before us. We are asked to approve an amendment that seeks to give one extra hour of opening to pubs on a Sunday.

My support for the amendment is lukewarm because I believe that it will create an anomaly between pubs and clubs. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State rightly said that there are important differences between pubs and clubs, and he went on to ask whether those who run clubs want the differences to remain. I do not think that that is the issue. Hitherto, clubs have been allowed the same number of hours as pubs. If we accept the amendment, we shall be creating an anomaly. Pubs will be able to open for six and a half hours on a Sunday and clubs will be restricted to five and a half hours. I find that difficult to accept, especially as the Minister of State in another place said that the Bill had been introduced to tidy up some anomalies. In my opinion, the amendment is creating an anomaly.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State asked the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) why he had not tabled an amendment to the amendment if he felt so strongly about the issues raised by it. The views that have been expressed by Opposition Members are not peculiar to the Labour party. Some of my hon. Friends are worried about the effect that the amendment will have on clubs. A few days ago, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), who is treasurer of the Association of Conservative Clubs, I went to the Public Bill Office to seek to table an amendment to the amendment. We were told that because the House is able to consider only amendments that come within the narrow base of the Lords amendment, our proposal would be ruled out of order. That is why there is no amendment on that relating to clubs. The absence of such an amendment is not due to a lack of will on the part of Labour or Conservative Members. The rules of order prevent the tabling and selection of such an amendment.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for his candid opening remarks. He acknowledged that the debate is taking place as a result of a cock-up. I take it that the consequences of the amendment were not envisaged by the Government. I am prepared to accept this amendment on the basis that the Government and the House are prepared to keep an open mind. If a measure is brought before the House to remove the anomaly to which I have referred, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give it his support.

Mr. Anderson: The anomaly to which the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) has drawn our attention reflects the foolishness of the Government in adopting a piecemeal approach and accepting in part that which their Lordships stumbled into at a certain hour of the night, for no good reason. It seems that they were not competent enough at the correct time to do what they should have done.

I found it interesting when the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) argued that the amendment will stop for a decade any further liberalisation of licensing laws. He asserted that if there had been yet further liberalisation within the Bill, the reform of the licensing laws would have been removed from the agenda altogether. Were that the case, I would say aye to him, but I think that almost certainly he is speaking for himself, although clearly he is very experienced in the trade.

I admire the constancy of the stance of the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I fear that, as he said, Cassandra like, alcohol consumption is increasing, outlets are increasing and its availability is increasing. That will inevitably lead, as night follows day, to alcohol-related harm and all the adverse effects that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned so consistently in the House.

11.30 pm

The Minister is a skilled advocate. I am sure that he could put forward an equally plausible and well-argued case for any of the various options that he might have adopted. He suggested that the House should accept the amendment for three reasons. First, he suggested that it was modest—rather like the housemaid's baby. It was further suggested that, as in planning law, it would be a creeping commitment. There is a dynamic in the process of adding an hour here or there, until one finds that the whole structure has changed. In this amendment we see salami tactics being used by the trade.

We are seeking from the Government a willingness to stand up for the public interest against those vested interests that seek profit at all costs. When profit was mentioned, we heard a lone voice from the Conservative Benches say, "If it were not for profits, you would not have your National Health Service." It was interesting to hear such a comment during a debate on alcohol.

The second proposition advanced by the Minister in support of the amendment was that there was public demand for this measure. If the Government had been responsive to public demand and public opinion in relation to the poll tax or the social security changes, I might be rather more ready to listen to the argument about public demand. It comes ill from a Government who, over a series of issues, have not shown themselves to be ready to listen to the voice of public demand.

The Minister's third proposition was that the amendment is not wrong in principle.

Sir Bernard Braine: In fairness to my hon. Friend the Minister, I should remind the House that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary:

"If such a misguided amendment were brought forward to try to include Sundays in the Bill may we have an assurance from my right hon. Friend that he would not back such a move?"

She received the following answer:

"I have already stated why I believe that it would be a mistake to overload the Bill by including such a provision." —[*Official Report*, 9 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 41.]

The House was given a clear understanding at that time that, in the Government's view, it would be a mistake to include Sundays. We still have not heard why, because of the failure of a Government Whip in the other place to do his duty, this is being foisted on the House tonight.

Mr. Anderson: The right hon. Gentleman, with his usual prescience, has anticipated the point that I was proposing to make. The Minister was raising a point of principle, but which is the more important principle—to say that the amendment should be considered on its merits or not on its merits, however modest the amendment may be, or in the light of the undertakings that the Government have consistently given to the House, which no doubt influenced the attitudes of certain hon. Members to the Bill?

The Government, who were bloody-nosed after their battering on the Shops Bill, were concerned not with principles, but with pragmatism, because they wanted to get the Bill through. They assured us that Sundays would not be affected in any way because of the Bill. The Bill was presented to us as a package, with Sunday excluded. I wholly accept the explanation that the Minister, a man of integrity, has given, that it was not a conspiracy; that it was not a wicked Government who wanted an extra hour on Sunday all along and encouraged their Lordships to look the other way; that it was a genuine mistake, and not something for which the Government should be held responsible.

However, the problem still remains as to how the Government should react. What I would like from the Minister is something similar to what the hon. Member for Gillingham said. Accepting that this has been an unintended measure of liberalisation—inadvertent and something that the Government had not intended—they can respond by saying, "Let it be; we shall let it go as it is", or they can seek to remove the amendment. The alternative, which I would commend to the Government, as the hon. Member for Gillingham has properly said, is that this is a measure of liberalisation which has gone so far and should go no further. The Government should commit themselves not to allow any further measure of liberalisation during the lifetime of this Parliament.

The hon. Member for Gillingham, who has consistently declared his own experience and interest in this matter, said that this would be accepted for decades, and would push the matter away from public debate. If the Minister were to say that, because of this mistake in the Lords, for pragmatic reasons, principled or otherwise, the Government were prepared to commit themselves to oppose any further measure to liberalise the licensing laws, I would say amen and leave it at that. No doubt that would have a degree of consensus in the House. However, if the Government leave it at that and encourage further measures of liberalisation, I would say that they are acting dishonourably.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Due to the procedural irregularity in another place, we have the opportunity well after half-past 11 on a Wednesday night to discuss what I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister is a very modest amendment, to permit an additional hour's drinking in public houses on a Sunday. I believe that it is a measure which will be welcomed by the public, the licensed victuallers, the hoteliers and visitors to Britain.

My only reservation is the one expressed by my hon. Friend for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) about clubs. I declare an interest as president of the Uxbridge Conservative club. However, we are not considering clubs tonight. We are considering this amendment as it comes from another place. It is not open to us to consider clubs, so we must address ourselves to the amendment.

Many public houses on Sundays now serve food, ranging from hot bar snacks, to brunch, to traditional Sunday roast. In pubs and restaurants with separate restaurant areas, customers are able to take advantage of the reform which allows alcoholic drinks to be served with a meal all day. As hon. Members know, that reform was passed by this House in 1987. However, even more pubs would offer food if the 2 pm peak were to be spread out.

I believe that Sunday lunch is an important family occasion. It is an important part of the traditional British Sunday. It contributes to the special nature of the day.

Many families wish to enjoy an occasional Sunday lunch at a pub, but the occasion is spoilt by the abrupt closure at 2 pm. All of us in this House are used to closures, but I dare say that many hon. Members present tonight would agree that an abrupt closure at 2 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon spoils what should be a leisurely family occasion. Not only does it seem strange and inconvenient to many people, but it causes them to wonder how such restrictive laws could still operate in 1988.

Sunday is a day on which most families have time for activities quite different from the busy rush of the working week. Many of them want to retain the traditional character of the British Sunday, and I am one. However, I do not believe that this change, which has come about inadvertently in another place, would in any way change the character of that special day. On the contrary, it would make the day just a little less frantic for all those people who want to go into a pub for lunch on Sunday.

I also want to draw the House's attention to the fact that the traditional pub, for which Britain is justly famous, is at an economic disadvantage compared with licensed restaurants. That point was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). Such restaurants can open all afternoon. Other food operations are allowed by law to trade all day. That means that many pubs cannot provide food for a reasonable period on Sunday and thus compete fairly with those other establishments. That is a powerful case for change.

I advise the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who spoke earlier about the position of staff in pubs throughout the country, that the view that I am expressing tonight is strongly supported by my local branch of the National Licensed Victuallers Association.

Mr. Hoyle: I did not refer to the National Licensed Victuallers Association; I referred to licensed house managers. My hon. Friends will be speaking about the staff who work in them. We are talking about the people who are employed, not about those who claim to be self-employed.

Mr. Shersby: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I understood that point well from his remarks. However,

[Mr. Shersby]

my point is that my remarks are strongly supported by the Uxbridge and District branch of the NLVA, which has made it clear to me that the association feels that it is in the public interest that public houses should be allowed to open later on Sundays if their customers require it.

I end by referring to visitors to Britain. All of us know that visitors to Britain face the closure of pubs of Sundays in a state of utter bewilderment. Many have come many thousands of miles to visit our country and find it strange that they cannot have a drink or something to eat in one of the famous British pubs after 2 o'clock on a Sunday——

Mr. Foulkes: In English pubs.

Mr. Shersby: I take the hon. Gentleman's point—they cannot do so in English pubs.

I understand that 47 per cent. of the complaints received by the English tourist board relate to the premature closure of pubs on Sundays. All of us want visitors to come to Britain and to come again.

For all those reasons, I believe that by accident—certainly not by design—their Lordships were right to ask the House to think again on this matter. I have done so, and I shall support this change this evening.

Mr. John Evans: At the outset I declare a non-paid interest in this subject in that I am the political secretary of the National Union of Labour and Socialist Clubs and vice-president of the committee of the Registered Clubs Association.

I believe that there is little demand for any additional hours of opening on a Sunday. Despite my well-known interest in the subject, I have not received one letter from anyone urging me to extend Sunday opening hours. The National Union of Labour and Socialist Clubs has never expressed a demand for additional hours on Sundays. If the Government had acted fairly in this respect and had ensured that there was conformity between clubs and pubs, I suspect that there would have been little interest in this debate and that many of us could have gone home much sooner.

11.45 pm

We were told that the purpose of the Bill was to modernise and relax licensing hours in England and Wales, and to remove anomalies. That proposition had all-party support in the House. I voted for the Bill on Second Reading. The Government Minister in another place said on 15 March:

"The question of Sunday hours is always a vexed one. I wish to make the Goverment's view clear. The Bill is intended to be a modest, non-controversial measure. The amendments are controversial."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 15 March 1988; Vol 494, c. 1051.]

That is right. There is little doubt that when the Bill left the House it had a great deal of support in all parts of the House. But that unanimity was destroyed when the Government allowed the amendment through the House of Lords.

How did the Government get into this mess in the first place? The Minister described this as a cock-up. That may or may not be so, but he has not explained how he got into this position or why the Goverment made no effort during the remaining stages of the Bill in another place to put the mess right. Nor has the Minister offered any explanation of why the Government did not move an amendment to put right an anomaly that they had created. And I assure the Minister that he has created a real problem. Clubs close, and will continue to close, at 2 pm on Sundays. They would have difficulty if they tried to vary their hours of opening—from 1 pm to 3 pm would be highly unpopular; they could try from 12 pm to 3 pm and then again from 8 pm to 10.30 pm, or from 7 pm to 9.30 pm on Sundays. None of those times would be popular. There is little doubt that clubs will be pressurised to maintain their present hours.

It will be an unedifying spectacle to watch people troop out of a club at 2 pm on Sundays and stay in the pub next door until 3 pm. That will create problems for the managers of licensed houses. Clubs can, to a large degree, control the people who enter them—they must be members or affiliates. But managers of licensed houses have no control over who enters their premises. The opposition that the National Association of Licensed House Managers has offered to this, through the medium of my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), is well thought out and well intentioned.

The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) accused the Labour party of being out of touch, saying that this was a popular measure. It might be popular with the brewers, but it will be somewhat unpopular with the millions of members of political and non-political clubs in this country, who will want to know of their Members of Parliament, Labour and Tory alike, why this ridiculous piece of discrimination has been introduced at such a late stage into what was was described as a non-controversial Bill.

The all-party clubs committee, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) pointed out, is by far the biggest parliamentary group, has made it clear that there should be no such discrimination between clubs and pubs. We are all united about one thing, irrespective of the massive political differences between us in every other area: we all want clubs to prosper and grow. We want them to continue to offer their services to the communities; that applies to Tory, Labour and Liberal clubs and non-political clubs. I remind the House that there are far more non-political clubs than political ones.

I seek an assurance from the Minister that goes further than that sought by the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). I do not think that we should ask the Minister to keep an open mind regarding the future. The Minister should give a clear undertaking that he will, at the first opportunity, introduce a simple one-clause Bill that will correct the anomaly for which the Government are responsible.

I am aware that some of my hon. Friends wish to discuss the terms of employment and conditions of those who work in public houses, and I shall not dwell on that subject.

Unless the Minister gives us the clear undertaking for which we have asked, it is my intention to divide the House to ensure that the unnecessary anomaly that has been created by the Government will be voted upon.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): In common with other hon. Members who have contributed to the debate, it is necessary for me to declare an interest. As a practising advocate I have represented a number of companies that might be expected to profit were the amendment to be accepted by the House.

That necessary declaration of interest is perhaps less significant on this occasion in view of my attitude to the amendment. I regret that the amendment does not find favour with me. I say that with regret because, as a member of the Clayson committee on the licensing law reform, whose report formed the basis of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, I supported the opening of public houses on Sundays, which, before 1976, was not permitted by Scottish law.

I favour a much more relaxed licensing regime on Sundays, but I recognise that that view is not necessarily universally held inside or outside the House. It is notable that, after the passage of the 1976 Act, the opening provisions were among the most controversial and those that provoked the greatest public opposition when applications were made to licensing boards in Scotland. It is also notable that, as the Act made its way through Parliament, the Sunday opening provisions were most controversial.

When the current Licensing Bill received its Second Reading, Ministers described it as a modest extension that dealt with weekday opening only. It has already been pointed out, in a telling intervention from the Father of the House, that when questions were asked of Ministers it was made perfectly clear that they had no intention of making any alteration to licensing provision on Sundays. As a result of that assurance, a number of my hon. Friends, together with a number of other hon. Members, were persuaded to vote for the Bill on Second Reading who might otherwise not have been constrained to do so.

On Report a clause was tabled in relation to Sunday opening, but that clause was not pressed in spite of lengthy debate in which many of the issues that have been canvassed this evening were discussed.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. and learned Gentleman said that the Sunday opening provisions in Scotland were controversial and he implied that they were not proving a success. He will be aware that my constituency is principally a tourist centre and Sunday opening is extremely popular not just with tourists, but with the local residents. What has been the reaction in Scotland to Sunday opening? My experience is that it has been almost universally successful, and that seems to be the case throughout Scotland. Does he deny that?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman should attend the three-day meetings of Glasgow district licensing board and listen to the applications which are made for Sunday opening and to the objections which are made to the applications. He should follow some of the cases through to the sheriff court, where Sunday opening is frequently the subject of considerable dispute and contest.

Of course it has been successful. As someone who supported it in the report of the Clayson committee, I would hardly be likely to suggest otherwise. But there is a distinction to be drawn between its success and the public attitude to it. That is a very important distinction in the context of what we are discussing, having regard to the rather bloody nose that the Government got when they attempted to change the law on Sunday trading in England and Wales.

No acute constitutional issue arises from the fact that the amendment originated in the other place. However, good faith arises in the light of the Government's attitude previously and robustly expressed. The Bill is not a proper vehicle for an alteration to Sunday opening provisions. To innovate upon the existing provision is essentially a matter of principle. Although it has been explained by the Minister in some infelicitous language as inadvertence, that if anything makes the matter even more indefensible.

If there is to be an alteration in Sunday licensing provisions, it should come about only as part of an overall review not only of licensing on Sundays but of other activities as well. This is an accidental, piecemeal change which the Government are prepared to accept. That is hardly the basis for good legislation.

Mr. Favell: I too declare an interest, in that I am treasurer of the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd. If anybody had an interest in an extra hour for drinking in clubs on a Sunday it is I. I support the amendment, but I join the hon. Members for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) and St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) in pressing the Government to introduce a short Bill during the next Session, hopefully, to put the matter right for clubs.

As for the extra hour for drinking on a Sunday, it may well have slipped through in another place, but it would not slip through in this House if there were not overwhelming public support for it; of that I have no doubt. Indeed, the Labour party would not be on a one-line Whip unless it too thought that it was a popular proposal.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that, on every occasion on which licensing has been discussed in the House, the Labour party has had a free vote and will continue to do so? It is only Conservative Members who are subject to the interests of the brewers and who have to have a Whip on that basis.

Mr. Favell: I am glad to hear that members of the Labour party are on a one-line Whip, and always will be, on such matters.

No matter what is said in the House, the British public house is a British institution which is the envy of many foreign visitors and which is cherished by the people who live here. Our public houses do very little harm and a great deal of good. The people who run and man them are to be congratulated on what they do for society. I have no hesitation in supporting the amendment. It will be highly popular and the House should accept it.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): We have heard a great deal about public demand and the popularity of the amendment. Hon. Members who make such statements are speaking for only half of the population, the male half; indeed, it is not half, but the smaller part of the population. I have yet to hear any evidence that women are queuing up to urge hon. Members to ask for longer opening hours for public houses.

12 midnight

Conservative Members seem to imagine that the country is populated by some peculiar families. All the references have been to families who are prosperous, who are childless, and who spend all their Sundays in pubs. There are a good many other things that families can do on Sundays. Families in which there are young children, and where the wife has spent time cooking good food, will be left waiting until the husband arrives home, and they are not asking—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mrs. Wise: We know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if any Member talks about the interests of women, it immediately becomes a matter for hilarity among Conservative Members. They should be ashamed of themselves. I noticed earlier that when an hon. Gentleman spoke about attacks on the police and on a policewoman his remarks were the source of great hilarity on the Conservative Benches, which was very inappropriate. We become accustomed to the way in which women and women's interests are regarded by some male Members of the House.

I do not know of one right hon. or hon. Member who has been besieged by women from his constituency asking for public houses to be open for longer on Sundays.

Mr. Dickens: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Wise: No. The hon. Gentleman has had many bites at the cherry during this debate, and I shall not give way to him.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone) *rose*——

Mrs. Wise: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), because I am a feminist, and proud of it.

Miss Widdecombe: I thank the hon. Lady. I put it to her that, although I am not a great advocate of longer Sunday opening hours, perhaps there is a group of women who would welcome them. I speak of housewives who cook all week and who want to be taken out for lunch on Sunday.

Mrs. Wise: There is an opportunity to go out for Sunday lunch. No one is suggesting that people who do not want to be tied to their house should be, but it is not necessary to extend drinking hours so that people can find the time to go out for Sunday lunch.

Mr. Hoyle: Does not all this show just how far Conservative Members are out of touch? Is it not true that the male-dominated household that we are trying to replace—*[Interruption.]* We expect the yahoos among Conservative Members to laugh their heads off—especially those who have a vested interest, such as the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). It is in their interests, is it not?

The point is that when the husband goes drinking on Sunday the family's midday meal is ruined. We shall find that there are more disturbed families because of this provision. If the man of the house does not go to the pub but stays at home, a meal will be cooked—and that is how it should be.

Mrs. Wise: I take my hon. Friend's point. As I said before, the women of this country are not queueing up for longer drinking hours on Sundays. Many families will be disturbed by this change. I do not believe that Conservative Members have been asking their women constituents for their views on this matter. The interests of the family will not be served by the amendment.

I suggest also that at this particular time the emphasis placed by Conservative Members on extra drinking is particularly inappropriate. Many families do not have enough money to go out for their meals or even to provide a meal in their own homes. Some people are growing steadily poorer, and the emphasis placed by Conservative Members on the opportunity to spend more money on drink on a Sunday is inappropriate.

I turn briefly to the interests of those who work in the licensed trade. Hon. Members have said that they can be protected. Working people can always be protected, and trade unions are always powerful and efficient when Conservative Members want to remove protection from them but at the moment, throughout the service trades, workers' conditions are deteriorating. They are being presented with contracts of employment which are disgraceful, which extend their hours and worsen their conditions—and they are told that if they do not like those contracts there are plenty of people queueing up for their jobs.

It is folly to suggest that those workers face their employers on equal terms, especially such employers as the brewers. Indeed, many workers in the service trades are not lucky enough to have contracts of employment at all, and fear for their jobs from week to week. That is the sort of society into which we have been led. The public demand detected by Conservative Members does not include the majority of women, and it does not include the workers involved in this trade. Certainly members of my trade union have a strong objection to any interference with Sunday trading of any description.

The Minister has told us that the amendment is with us because of the incompetence of his colleagues in another place. We are told that because of that incompetence we should accept it. There is no reasoned case for the measure —it was not advocated when the Bill came to this House —but because there has been incompetence and a mistake has been made, that mistake is now turned into a virtue and we are told that we should support it. I think that if one has made a mistake it is common sense to try to correct it as early as possible, and that is what should be done tonight.

I must part company from some of my hon. Friends. The correction that we seek is not that of the anomaly between the pubs and the clubs. We should not extend to the clubs what is being wrongly extended to the pubs; the status quo is what is required. This is not supposed to be a Sunday trading matter, and it should not become so because an amendment is sneaked in in the other place, and then presented to us to be made a permanent error.

I hope that hon. Members will join us in voting against the perpetuation of the amendment.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall be extremely brief, as the hour is late.

Do the Minister and his hon. Friends consider Sunday to be special? The House did a while ago, as was made clear in the vote on the Shops Bill 1986. If they consider Sunday to be special, do they really feel that five and a half hours' drinking time is sufficient on a Sunday?

If we continue along this road, Sunday will be just like any other day. I believe that the vast majority in this country want Sunday to continue in its traditional way. In my opinion, the vast majority of households still enjoy Sunday lunches at home—usually, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) has said, prepared by the lady of the house.

Traditions differ from area to area. In the mining community in which I had the privilege to be brought up, it has always been traditional for the male to have his drink at Sunday lunchtime. Sunday lunch was prepared for a

certain time, so that the family could enjoy it together and the children could go to Sunday school. Unfortunately, that way of life is no longer the norm in many parts of the country.

I see the dangers in keeping pubs open for another hour on Sunday. God forbid that it ever happens. There will be the temptation for males to stay that extra hour in pubs and clubs.

Mr. David Lightbown (Staffordshire, South-East): Never.

Mr. Lofthouse: If the answer is "never", why is the extra hour needed? This could lead to matrimonial upset. We have heard that many divorces are caused by drink-related problems. The longer the opening hours, the more people will stay away from their families, drinking. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Preston, I do not want the clubs to get the extra hour. I want the change to be the other way. Five and a half hours drinking on the Sabbath is quite enough. When that is no longer so, the Sabbath will mean very little. Conservative Members may laugh, but that is a dangerous road to go down.

The extension of club opening hours would place a financial strain on some of those who use the clubs, which provide the only recreation in areas similar to that which I represent and have lived in all my life—the mining communities. Because the clubs are non-profit making, members enjoy lower prices for drinks than those charged by the pubs. If the pubs have an advantage of an extra hour on Sunday, the club members could be attracted to them for the whole of their opening time, or even just for the extra hour. That could destroy some of the clubs. We all know about the large unemployment rates in the mining communities. The new law could threaten those clubs.

I know of no person in my constituency who desires an extra hour of drinking at Sunday lunchtime. There may be pockets of demand, but overall there is no general desire for it in the country.

I do not want to shove my beliefs down anybody's throat, but I hope that the House will always protect the Sabbath and keep Sunday as a special day. To extend the opening hours of pubs, or those of shops, would destroy the traditional Sunday, which I hope we shall always strive to maintain. If we should lose our Christian traditions, in which we have always brought up our children, and instead get into the habit of taking them to the pub, God protect us.

12.15 am

My final point shows that Sunday drinking could become very dangerous. Great anxiety has been expressed recently about under-age drinking. A great deal of that drink is bought in supermarkets. In my area supermarkets are closed on Sundays, so young people are attracted to the pubs and clubs. I am sure that the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), who owns pubs, will appreciate that it is difficult to ascertain the ages of those youngsters. Because the supermarkets are closed, youngsters will go to pubs and stay there for the extra hour that has been proposed.

I hope that if there is a Division the House will throw out the amendment.

Mr. Cryer: I am not a drinker of alcohol, but I have a degree of tolerance for those who drink that has not been exhibited by drinkers towards people like me.

I have received representations about the legislation from the parishioners of Great Horton parish church, who sent me a petition signed by 400 people who were opposed to the legislation. I raised the matter when the House discussed the issue. The Minister came to the Dispatch Box and said that he would advise Conservative Members to vote against the proposal to add an extra hour on Sundays. The Bill went to the other place, and the same Minister came back to the House and, with breathtaking arrogance, said that the Government had made a complete mess of their organisation in the other place. Their Lordships were intoxicated either with their own majority or with alcohol and could not manage to vote on a decision that had already been made in the House of Commons.

The Minister then told us that, having made that serious error, the Government did not consider it, but are throwing it in front of us——

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) put into the Minister's mouth words that he certainly did not use. I have been present throughout the debate, and the Minister did not use that language about the other place. It is wrong of the hon. Gentleman to introduce such language.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is capable of putting words into the Minister's mouth, but the hon. Gentleman should restrain his language.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not inappropriate for the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to accuse their Lordships of being intoxicated? That is certainly unparliamentary.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a more direct point of order and certainly a genuine one. It would be quite approprate for the hon. Member to withdraw the remarks that he has just made.

Mr. Cryer: I did not say that their Lordships were intoxicated. *Hansard* will show that I did not say that. I said that that was a possible explanation for what the Minister told us. The Minister said that they had made a cock-up. That is the sort of language that we are told should not be used, but it is what the Minister said.

What does a cock-up mean? It means that they made a mess of it. Why did they make a mess of it? The Minister has not told us. I suggested two alternatives. I did not say that they were intoxicated. I asked whether that was a possible explanation. The Minister told us that there was a cock-up, but he did not define exactly what that means.

The Minister comes to the House and says that after that mess up in the other place the Government, with a massive number of civil servants, and with massive facilities at their disposal, have thrown the mess that was made in the other place in front of us and decided to recommend acceptance of the Lords amendment. That does not make much sense. I do not believe that even this Government can be so casual.

An amendment was made in the other place. Perhaps the Whips missed a few strokes, but the Government are shrugging their shoulders and have decided to brazen it

[Mr. Cryer]

out. The Minister is quite good at brazening it out. He, as a brazen Minister, is acting according to his usual instincts. He said that when he recommended his hon. Friends to vote against the amendment it was a throw-away line, that no reasoned argument was put to hon. Members at that time, just as no reasoned argument has been put before hon. Members tonight.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) made a telling speech. It is very good that there are some hon. Members who are prepared to adopt a minority line against the trend, which is to let the brewers have free play and to acquiesce to the mythical notion that some tourists are confused about the licensing hours in this country, though they take about five minutes to explain to anybody of average intelligence.

The right hon. Gentleman is right. Alcohol ravages our society. Hon. Members know that, because we see it here. We are not supposed to say that any hon. Member gets drunk, but we know that we could stop some of the drunkenness by closing or limiting the opening times of some of the bars in this place. If we shut our eyes—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is muttering about this providing more copy for *The Sun*. I thought that the article in *The Sun* was extremely offensive. I was among those who were characterised as being certified alcoholics. That is absolutely and completely untrue. I am a teetotaller. But that matter is being taken up. The agenda for me is not laid down by *The Sun*, *The Daily Express* or any other organs of the gutter press. If I choose, for the purpose of my speech, to point to faults in this place, that is a matter for me, whatever the hacks who cook up the stories for *The Sun* care to think about it.

You were not here at the time, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it is very interesting to note that when this debate began there were a number of anxious faces looking down from the Press Gallery. They are very interested in this subject because some of them are very experienced in it. They are part of the havoc that alcohol wreaks in our society.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point referred to the fact that one fifth of all acute beds in the National Health Service are filled by those with alcohol-related problems. Because of the crisis in the National Health Service, would we not give our right arms to make those beds available to others? Ten years ago the Blennerhassett committee pointed to the link between driving and drinking and the resultant accident rate. The danger is that the extension of opening hours will result in a greater degree of alcoholism.

Many people enjoy drinking in pubs and clubs, but some people want to enjoy quiet Sundays. Many people have a strong religious faith. We must cater for those who want to enjoy a quiet alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink in a pub or a club, and for those who do not. Alcohol can be an intrusion, and we have to make a judgment about it. The Minister has not shown that he has made a judgment based on a serious examination of the problem. He said that a mistake had been made in the other place and that this House should approve it. That will not help to create a society that will accommodate both points of view—those who want to relax in pubs and clubs, and those who want a reasonably quiet and special sort of Sunday.

Mr. Foulkes: I think that we have had that argument.

Mr. Cryer: If my hon. Friend keeps interfering and interrupting, I shall be happy to go over every point repeatedly until he feels that I have made it clear to him beyond peradventure.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend has done it.

Mr. Cryer: I know that other hon. Members have been listening with much more tolerance, and I do not want to detain the House for long, but there is an alternative open to the Government. They can take the legislation away and bring it back on another day. It was their decision, not ours, to bring the Bill on late at night.

The Government should withdraw the motion. On their own admission, it is a bad amendment. There have been many comfortable smiles on the faces of Tory Members who have financial interests in this matter. I hope that all those who have a direct pecuniary interest will not vote, so that the accusation cannot be made that they will gain a direct financial benefit from the extra hour during which pubs will be open because it will help to line their pockets. That would clearly be against the interests of the reputation of those hon. Members and of the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are three matters on which it might be helpful if I responded. The first is what happened in the other place. The omission to press a Division in the other place was due to an act of inadvertence. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, who was responsible for the legislation in the other place, cried "Not content" the first time, but, in order to press a Division, it was necessary that somebody—either my right hon. Friend or the Whip—should cry, "Not content" a second time. That either did not happen or it was not heard. Probably it did not happen. We are dealing with recollection, so I am trying to be strictly accurate. The amendment was made without a Division. That was not in any way part of the Government's design. The Government's design was to resist the amendment and to press it to a Division. That did not happen, for the reason that I have given.

It is fair to say to the House that it was the judgment of everyone present in the other place that the mood of their Lordships was very much in favour of the amendment. Those who had to assess the mood in the other place were quite plain that the amendment would have been carried. That was not the reason for the failure to cry "Not content" a second time, but it is the context in which we must set our decision now.

Mr. John Evans: What a fairy story.

Mr. Hogg: I heard that sedentary intervention. I am not deceiving the House. I am stating the facts clearly and precisely, and I believe the information to be true.

Mr. Evans: If it is not a fairy story, will the Minister tell us why, in line with his pledges on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report, and in view of the Home Secretary's statements, he has not asked the House of Commons to reject the Lords amendment?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is eliding two questions. The first is whether I am deceiving the House. The answer is no. The second is why we are asking the House to agree to the Lords amendment. That is a separate question. Those who were present in the other place were quite plain that the mood was in favour of the amendment. Therefore, the question is whether it makes sense for us to try to reverse that decision. If we are being

candid with ourselves and with one another, we should recognise that we should do that only if we really have good cause to argue.

That takes me to the second point——

Mrs. Ann Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: Perhaps I may finish this point, and then I shall give way to the hon. Lady. It raises the question whether the amendment before the House is wrong in principle or in practice. I recognise that it is a matter of individual judgment, but my judgment is plain: we are asking the House——

Mr. Hoyle *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: When I finish this point, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

We are asking the House to extend Sunday opening by one hour from 2 o'clock to 3 o'clock to enable people to have lunch with their families and to meet a genuine need or desire. Can that extension of one hour be categorised as wrong in practice or in principle? In my considered judgment, it is unsustainable to say that it is wrong either in practice or in principle.

12.30 am

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister confirm that the amendment was moved in Committee in the other place and that there was, therefore, an opportunity on Report and, as I understand the procedure, also on Third Reading to change it? Will he also confirm that the payroll vote operates in the other place, as it will operate tonight in the House when the Government try to railroad the measure through? Does he accept that a good cause for rejecting the amendment is the assurances that he and his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary have given on repeated occasions?

Mr. Hogg: Let me deal with the hon. Lady's first question. It would have been possible in the other place to try to reverse the decision made in Committee, but, in deciding whether to do that, one must have regard to the quality of the argument and to the probability of success. I have made it plain to the House that, in the judgment of those who have to assess the mood of their Lordships, it was clear that there was a majority in favour of the amendment.

Secondly, it is impossible to say that the amendment offends either principle or logic. I have never believed that it is wrong either in principle or practice. When the matter has been before the House on previous occasions, Ministers, including myself and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, have made it plain that we opposed the extension, but we also made it plain that we did so not for reasons of principle which we do not believe apply, but for practical reasons, because we thought that it would sink the Bill. However, it has not sunk the Bill and it is leading to a small extension which, in all conscience, we cannot say contravenes logic or principle.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Minister agree that if we relied upon the quality of the argument, the Government would have been defeated many times in this House and in the other place? Is he not going back on all the assurances that he has given? Does he accept that he has deceived the House, although that may be a strong word to use? Should not the Government have stood firm on the assurances given to so many people?

Mr. Hogg: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary have on this, or on any other matter, deceived the House. We stated that we would resist the amendment and try to persuade our colleagues to do likewise because the position has now changed. The other place has passed an amendment, and we must decide whether this is an issue on which to go to war with the other place. It is a matter of some substance. The other place has expressed a clear view. The question is whether, where we do not believe that an issue of principle is involved, it is right or sensible to lock ourselves in an argument with the other place.

Mr. Steel: The Minister is advancing an interesting, novel and, in some ways, encouraging constitutional theory. He is saying that if the other place has a certain mood and produces a certain quality of argument, the Government should turn turtle. Will this apply to the poll tax?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman knows that, while I may have had a hand in drafting the Licensing Bill, I did not have a direct hand in drafting the Local Government Finance Bill.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend will recall that on Second Reading my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made it clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that he did not wish to overload the Bill. That was in response to a question from my hon. Friend in which she sought an assurance that there would be no tampering with Sunday opening hours. My hon. Friend the Minister is telling the elected House of Commons that, owing to inadvertence in the House of Lords, it was decided not to reverse that which was before their Lordships because the mood of the upper House was conveyed to the Government in some way. The mood of either House of Parliament can be conveyed only by a vote.

Mr. Hogg: I have a feeling that there is a mood now that we should proceed with the business. Therefore, I shall move rapidly to the third point that I want to make, which relates to pubs and clubs.

There is a major disparity already in the treatment by the law of pubs and clubs. That is the position in England and Wales in any event. For example, the law on under-age drinking applies to pubs and not to clubs; and the police have an unfettered right of access to pubs but not to clubs.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I shall bring my remarks to a close. I shall not give way again during this debate.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Allen McKay: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it right that the Minister should say that clubs allow under-age drinking?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Minister has the right to deploy his argument as he thinks fit.

Mr. Hogg: It is true that the internal rules of many clubs prohibit the supply of drink to the under-aged. It is true also that the law on under-age drinking applies to pubs and not to clubs. That is the distinction that I was emphasising. The police have an unfettered right of access to pubs but not to clubs.

Mrs. Ann Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No, I shall not give way.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it absolutely clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Hogg: The point is——

Mrs. Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it clear to the Chair that he is not giving way.

Mr. Hogg: There is a case for making the law in its totality the same as between pubs and clubs, but I find it difficult to understand why clubs should be especially affronted by the distinction of six and a half hours for pubs on Sundays and five and half hours for clubs.

The problem with which the other place was concerned was whether——

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I have a ruling? The Minister is saying something that is patently wrong and he will not give way to enable us to correct him. We are seeking to explain to him that he is wrong and he will not give way. What can we do, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a point of argument, not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Hogg: The other place considered whether it was right to extend the Sunday opening of pubs by one hour to 3 o'clock to enable the public to have a more leisurely drink at lunchtime. Clubs can already do that by law.

I suggest that the House will wish to agree with the Lords amendment.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 119, Noes 26.

Division No. 281] **[12.40 am**

AYES

Amoss, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foulkes, George
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Speed, Keith
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hoyle, Doug
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wallace, James
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Clelland and
Mr. John Evans.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 1

MODIFICATION OF PERMITTED HOURS

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

"( ) In subsection (6) of that section (premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor for consumption off the premises), the words 'half past' shall be omitted."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 17.

Mr. Hogg: The amendment will allow off-licences to open at 8 am. Again, I invite the House to accept the amendment.

At the moment, off-licences can open at 8.30 am. The amendment therefore advances the hour by 30 minutes. That coincides with many opening hours and helps the early shopper. I cannot say that it is wrong in principle, and, on that basis, I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3

RESTRICTION ORDERS

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 3, leave out lines 7 to 10 and insert—

"(b) any person living in the neighbourhood, or any body representing persons who do;

(c) any person carrying on a business in the neighbourhood or managing or otherwise in charge of it in the neighbourhood; or

(d) the head teacher or other person in charge of any educational establishment in the neighbourhood."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 4 and 8 to 11.

Mr. Hogg: I commend the amendment to the House. It is the fulfilment of a commitment that I gave on Report to make it plain that head teachers are among the group of persons who have a right to apply for a restriction order. There are various other changes, but that is the substantial one.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: We welcome the amendment, as it is one that we asked for in Committee. Strangely enough, this is another example of the Government's incompetence. In the debate on Lords amendment No. 1, we heard that the Government's incompetence in another place had led them inadvertently to accept an amendment on Sunday opening. In Committee we were given an assurance that the Government would bring forward on Report an amendment to include head teachers among those who could apply for an exemption order, but somehow, due to the Government's incompetence, that amendment was left out of the Government's amendments on Report. The Bill seems to be dogged with difficulties. However, we are pleased that the Government have decided to put this point right, although it is a minor step considering the extent of the changes that we were requesting.

The Minister knows that we are extremely concerned about the level of alcohol consumption by young people and about the problems that exist for young people. As the Minister also knows, we considered carefully in Committee and on Report the recommendations of the Masham committee, which showed that ten times as many deaths were caused by alcohol abuse as by drug abuse. The Masham committee told us that a vast number of young people drink alcohol under age on a regular basis. Indeed, 52 per cent. of 15-year-old boys drink alcohol once a week. The Masham committee also showed that the law relating to the consumption of alcohol by those under 18 was "complicated, anomalous and widely flouted."

We had hoped that the Minister would use the other place to introduce more amendments to deal with the problem of under-age drinking. We are in a strange position—the Government are pressing ahead with their Bill while paying lip service to the problem of under-age drinking and the recommendations of the Masham committee.

Although we welcome this limited amendment, which we requested, we are extremely disappointed that the Government are not taking seriously the problem of under-age drinking and I hope that the Government will do something about it in the future. We cannot continue to store up problems for the future by allowing too many people high levels of alcohol consumption. The problem should concern the Government as much as Opposition Members, and I am sorry that the Government have not taken this opportunity to do something about this serious problem.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.

New clause

POWER TO VARY PERMITTED HOURS IN ON-LICENSED VINEYARD PREMISES

Lords amendment: No. 5, after clause 7, insert new clause—

" . The following section shall be inserted after section 87 of the principal Act—

"*Power to vary permitted hours in on-licensed vineyard premises.*

87A.—(1) Licensing justices, on an application by the holder of a justices' on-licence for any premises which form part of a vineyard, may make an order varying the permitted hours in those premises if, after hearing evidence, they are satisfied—

(a) that the sale of intoxicating liquor on the premises is ancillary to the carrying on of a business of producing wine from grapes grown in the vineyard; and

(b) that it is desirable to make an order under this section for the accommodation of persons visiting the vineyard.

(2) An order under this section may vary the permitted hours either generally or for such days or part or parts of the year as the licensing justices think fit.

(3) In making an order under this section with respect to permitted hours on weekdays, other than Christmas Day or Good Friday, licensing justices may not so vary the hours as to make them exceed in total more than twelve hours on any day.

(4) In making an order under this section with respect to permitted hours on Sundays, Christmas Day or Good Friday, licensing justices may not so vary the hours as to make them—

(a) begin before twelve noon; or

(b) exceed in total more than five and a half hours on any day.

(5) A person intending to apply for an order under this section shall give notice in writing of his intention to the clerk to the licensing justices and the chief officer of police at least 21 days before the commencement of the licensing sessions at which the application is to be made.

(6) Licensing justices shall not hear an application for an order under this section unless notice under subsection (5) of this section has been duly given.

(7) Licensing justices may revoke or vary an order under this section; but, unless it is proved that the holder of the justices' on-licence had notice of the revocation or variation, a person shall not be guilty of an offence under section 59 of this Act in doing anything that would have been lawful had the revocation or variation not been made."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 13 and 14.

Mr. Hogg: This amendment is designed to assist the proprietors of English vineyards. It gives the justices a power to vary permitted hours on licensed vineyard premises, although within the existing total limits. I can expand on that if necessary.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

PROVISIONAL GRANT OF NEW LICENCE OR REMOVAL

Lords amendment: No. 6, before clause 8, insert the following new clause—

Provisional grant of new licence or removal

" . In section 6 of the principal Act (provisional grant of a new justices' licence or removal in the case of premises about to be or in course of construction etc.) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) The holder of a provisional licence may also apply to have a provisional grant declared final before the premises have been completed if it is likely that they will be completed as mentioned in paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of this section before the date appointed for the next licensing sessions; and the licensing justices, if they are satisfied that the premises are likely to be so completed and are further satisfied of the matters mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection, may direct that the declaration may be made before the next licensing sessions by a single licensing justice.

(4B) In a case where a direction has been given under subsection (4A) of this section, a single licensing justice, after such notice has been given as he may require, shall declare the provisional grant final if he is satisfied that the premises have been completed as mentioned in paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of this section.

(4C) Until a provisional grant has been declared final under subsection (4) of (4B) of this section it shall not be valid."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 15.

Mr. Hogg: This amendment is largely technical. It is a response to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). I can expand on it if desired; if not, I commend it.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

DISQUALIFIED PREMISES—GARAGES

Lords amendment: No. 7, before clause 8, insert new clause—

" . After section 9(4) of the principal Act there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) Premises shall be disqualified for receiving a justices' licence if they are primarily used as a garage or form part of premises which are primarily so used.

(4B) In subsection (4A) of this section, the reference to use as a garage is a reference to use for any one or more of the following purposes, namely, the retailing of petrol or derv or the sale or maintenance of motor vehicles.""

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment (a) and amendments Nos. 12 and 16.

Mr. Hogg: Subject to the House accepting amendment (a), I commend the substantive amendment to the House. I cannot commend the motion to disagree standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller).

This is a matter of somewhat greater moment than the other amendments that we have just dealt with. The effect of the substantive amendment is to disqualify premises that are primarily used as garages from holding off or on-licences. The amendment was carried in the other place, contrary to the advice of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State.

There are about 180 garages with licences. There is no evidence that would stand up to detailed analysis that the possession by those suppliers of a licence has led to any drunken driving. Because almost all these premises are in rural areas, they provide services for those who live in them. Perhaps a typical example would be a corner shop that supplied the ordinary facilities of a corner shop but also sold petrol. The question is what to do about the amendment, and what our attitude should be.

This is an opportunity to send a message dissociating alcohol from driving. If we were to try to reverse the amendment, it would send the wrong signal. Whatever the evidence might prove, we are probably dealing with perceptions. Therefore, I advise my hon. Friends and the House to send a message that dissociates alcohol from driving. For that reason I advise the House to accept the amendment.

1 am

There is a problem with the present 180 licence holders. They have adjusted their businesses on the assumption that they would be enabled to possess a licence. No doubt that is an important factor in their business considerations. The House must consider whether it would be right to alter the assumptions—in effect retrospectively—upon which they have constructed their businesses. I do not believe that it would. Although I commend the amendment to the House, I do so subject to the proviso, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), which safeguards the status of the present licence holders. The exemption would run with the land and attaches to the land. I am prepared to concede that that is an anomaly and is not wholly pure as a legalistic principle, but I hope that the House will be pragmatic.

I hope that the House will consider where justice lies. Having regard to those considerations, I advise the House to accept the amendment, subject to the proviso.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am extremely pleased that the Government have finally decided to accept the new clause that disqualifies garages and petrol stations from receiving a justices' licence. It is a relatively minor reform, but it is long overdue and I know that it has the support of the majority of the public.

There is no evidence to suggest that people buy alcohol from petrol stations and directly proceed to drink and drive. The Government and the public recognise, however, that drink-driving is the single main cause of death and injury on our roads. For that reason it is absurdly inappropriate—as my hon. Friend has made clear—to allow, still less to take special steps to enable, premises to sell alcohol, the primary purpose of which is to serve the motorist. Such action would cast serious doubt on the Government's readiness to take a firm stance on

drink-driving. The rejection of the new clause and the acceptance of the one proposed by some of my hon. Friends would undoubtedly be seen by the country as wholly inconsistent with, and indeed a deliberate attempt to undermine, the Government's road safety campaign. That campaign is concerned, above all, to sever the lethal association between alcohol and driving.

Alcohol and driving are a mismatch. The new clause is entirely in line with the conclusions and recommendations of the road traffic law review. That review should be debated by the House as a matter of urgency.

Although I am pleased that the Government have moved this far, albeit belatedly, I am concerned about the proposal to permit garages and petrol stations already in possession of justices' licences to retain them. Whatever the Government's reasons for supporting such a proposal, I am still concerned. Will the proposal not cause some uncertainty for the courts? What will happen when a licensed petrol station is sold to a new owner and the question arises of the transfer of the justices' licence?

What will happen when, in three years' time, licences come up for renewal? Will the licensing justices have the right to refuse an application for the transfer of the licence to a new owner or to refuse to renew a licence if they choose to do so, in line with their general licensing policy —which, of course, will be influenced by the passage of the new clause? Parliament should be told.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend asks a fair question. I apologise to him and to the House if I did not make it wholly plain. The ordinary powers of the justices to refuse to renew apply in respect of these licences. The difference that the proviso makes is that the disqualification does not bite on the existing licences. But all the other provisions in licensing legislation continue to apply to those licences.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that statement.

I am anxious to find out why the Government are bending over backwards to protect garages with existing licences. What is the justification? *[Interruption.]* My questions are being put in good faith, and the House is entitled to answers. We are told that there are only 180 such petrol stations. Many are in rural areas and are protected in any case by the terms of the new clause, as are hypermarkets. Surely there would be little or no inconvenience to the general public from the removal of the remaining licences. Nor do I believe that this would cause significant financial hardship to the proprietors. To allow the licences to stand when no more are to be granted is a manifestation of weakness and irresolution. The House is entitled to an answer to that charge.

If the Government are set upon this course, so be it. What matters above all is that the Government demonstrate in some way their conviction and determination that any association of alcohol with driving is a relic of a bygone age. We are told that the justification for the Bill is the need to reform licensing law in line with modern circumstances. One would have thought that the most pressing of modern needs was to rid the country as speedily as possible of the scourge of drinking and driving. The Under-Secretary of State for Transport is here and he can confirm what I am saying. The House needs to be reminded that every year there are 5,000 deaths on the roads of which 2,000 are alcohol-related. I beg my hon. Friend to realise that the Government must catch up with public opinion and stop being dragged along by vested interests.

Mr. Waller: The new clause which has been brought from the Lords was obviously passed with the intention of stopping drinking and driving. Superficially it seems to be helpful, but if one examines it more carefully, it is apparent that it will not have any real effect on drinking and driving but will have other undesirable effects.

The clause will not affect major supermarket retailers, even though many supermarkets are linked to petrol sales. Without the amendment, it would affect existing small stores, mainly in rural areas. Those stores are combined with petrol stations for economic reasons. Without the petrol side, I suspect that in many cases the small stores could not exist, to the detriment of local amenity and employment.

If the prohibition would be wrong for existing stores cum petrol stations, as the Government accept, it must also be wrong for those who in the future wish to establish businesses on similar lines. The new clause is illogical because it ignores the fact that those who buy alcohol in stores do not do so to drink it immediately before getting into their cars. No one would suggest that public houses should not be permitted to have car parks. However, perhaps there would be more logic in such a ban than in a prohibition on people buying alcohol at stores that have petrol stations or garages attached, to take home with them.

The precise meaning of the new clause, in its final form, is not entirely clear. It appears that it could apply to a store that shares its site with a petrol station run completely separately. There is scope for lawyers to argue about those matters in the future. I am against that, because it will provide more money for lawyers but will not do anyone else much good.

I accept my hon. Friend's assurance that the clause will be improved by the Government's amendments, because I do not believe that existing premises should be hit, as they would be if the Government's amendment to the Lords amendment is not passed. Even so, it will ossify existing situations, whether or not they make sense in the future. If, for example, there is a population shift in any area or if a bypass is built, the owner of a store-cum-garage may reach the conclusion that he cannot move because, whereas he can retain the alcohol licence on his existing premises, he will not be able to obtain one for a new site, however strong his arguments.

It is unfortunate that the Government are not reversing the decision made in another place. My hon. Friend said that to do so could be to send the wrong signals. Although that is a significant consideration, I hope that he will put first the important matter of getting the legislation right. I hope that the arguments that he and others may deploy in the other place and elsewhere will be sufficiently convincing to ensure not only that the new clause can be reversed but also that the wrong signals are not sent.

The Government could have explained why the new clause passed in the Lords will do nothing to help, and why it may do some harm. The amendment mitigates that harm but the clause is a step back, to set against the considerable number of steps forward that the Bill incorporates.

Mr. Forth: I appreciate the positive response by my hon. Friend the Minister to the amendment in my name.

[Mr. Forth]

It demonstrates the balanced view that must necessarily be taken of this matter in trying to understand the concern that has been expressed, in particular by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), about garages selling alcohol. However, we must equally recognise that no firm evidence has been produced of a direct connection between such sales and drink-driving offences.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my hon. Friend confirm that alcohol can be sold by garages adjoining main roads, but not by similar garages adjoining motorways?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an important point and I am most grateful to him. We must also recognise, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, the important role that garages play in rural communities. This consideration is of importance to many right hon. and hon. Members and is behind the thrust of the amendment. I welcome what has been said by my hon. Friend the Minister and hope that the House will accept the amendment in his name and mine, in order to recognise the problem identified in another place and the important role played by garages in rural communities, which role we can sustain by carrying the amendment.

Miss Widdecombe: Although I support the amendment to the Lords amendment, I regard it as a very poor third best. As far as I can see, it does not direct itself to the essential problem, which is not whether alcohol is sold together with petrol, but the nature and control of alcohol sales. I suggest that they are best controlled at local level, by magistrates.

I made it clear on Second Reading that I am extremely worried about drink driving and any possible encouragement to drivers to drink. That is why I think it right that garages adjoining motorways should not be able to sell alcohol. Drivers stop at such garages and would have the opportunity to consume alcohol.

1.15 am

My constituency, which serves an entirely rural area, contains a major development. The owner set up initially as a garage, and then set up a store specialising exclusively in wines. I know that modern cars have many gadgets, and that modern dashboards have many amenities, but I do not recall a corkscrew being among them. I need a lot of convincing that someone who goes into that shop and buys a bottle of wine will solemnly uncork it at the next set of traffic lights and take a drink from it.

I believe that if beer is being sold in single cans, possibly on ice, there may well be a temptation to buy a single can, open it and down it. Similarly, I can just about believe that a driver might be tempted to take a nip of spirits, but not to uncork a wine bottle. That is why I say that the nature of sales is important and that the best people to judge that are local magistrates.

I am, of course, very pleased that my constituents have been protected. Within 24 hours of the Lords amendment being known I had received a petition containing about 200 names from people in the locality. The proprietor of the business receives only a 4·5 per cent. profit on his petrol sales, which is cut to under 2 per cent. by the use of credit cards. He makes his main income from his wine business. If he were obliged to close down, people from miles around in that rural area would not have garage amenities and would not be able to buy petrol.

While I am delighted that that garage proprietor is protected, which is why I willingly accept the amendment, I am not so delighted that any future similar enterprises —conscientious, responsible and not encouraging drink-driving—will not be allowed to flourish. There is no proven link between the purchase of alcohol at a petrol station and drink-driving. If the House really wants to get rid of drink-driving, let us close down all the country pubs tomorrow. I am sure that that would not commend itself to many hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), but that is the logic. The proposal hits at the periphery, not at the centre, of drink-driving.

The Lords amendment talks about "primary purpose". I assume that to be used in planning terms. If the garage preceded the wine business the primary purpose is the garage, but, as in many such enterprises, the associated stores and business are actually the primary source of profit. There is confusion here.

This is a poor Lords amendment. The tidying-up of it is third best, but at least it protects existing licensees, and for that reason I am glad to support it.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am happy to endorse everything that has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe). She has set out the position with great clarity, and done the House a service in so doing.

I am sorry to have to quarrel with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), with whom I see eye to eye on many subjects——

Sir Bernard Braine: We do not quarrel.

Mr. Harris: Then I shall use the word "disagree".

My right hon. Friend asked what was the justification for the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). Obviously, as has already been said, the amendment is of particular significance to rural areas. I do not know how much my right hon. Friend knows about such areas. They are very different from his constituency. When the matter was debated in another place, Lord Ferrers said that he thought there were about 150 licensed garages, not 180. That may not matter too much. He then went on to say:

"When the department sought details of the number of licences granted to garages in 1986"—

perhaps that explains the discrepancy—

"it emerged that over half were to be found in the four counties of Devon, Cornwall, Norfolk and Dyfed."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 31 March 1988; Vol. 495, c. 892.]

Those four counties are largely rural, and those licensed garages are, I suspect, in the rural areas. I can speak only for Cornwall, and, to a certain extent, Devon, but that certainly is the case there. As has been said, many of them are petrol stations with an adjoining village shop, or, increasingly, a minimarket.

The proprietor of just such a business wrote to me a couple of days ago and set out his position. The business is run by the family—the man, his wife and daughter—and employs four shop assistants. It is typical of the small businesses that are essential to the well-being of the rural areas. This one is on a main road, and is roughly about half way between two towns. There are adjoining caravan

sites, as it is a tourist area, and I have stopped at the garage and used the minimarket—not to buy alcohol, although I know that many people do. The irony is that 20 yards away is a pub. As the proprietor points out, it would be nonsense if the other place had its way. Someone would drive into his forecourt, park his car, go into the minimarket for groceries, and then, because he wanted some alcohol before going back to the camp site or the cottage up the road, go into the pub to buy alcohol from the off-sales.

I make no secret of the fact that I would prefer the House to reject the Lords amendment, but I accept the points made by my hon. Friend the Minister. Therefore, with some reluctance, I agree that the practical course is to accept the amendment to the amendment, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire. We owe it to established businesses to let them continue in the way that they have continued for several years and to serve their local communities. I hope that, on reflection, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point will see the justice in that. I would like to go much further and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone has said, leave it to magistrates. If we are not going to do that, in equity, we must protect the established businesses. Therefore, I support the amendment to the amendment.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am in the strange position of being one of the few hon. Members here to support the Minister. His hon. Friends have been overreacting in setting out some of the difficulties that they think will be created by this modest amendment. This is one of the few amendments that could be so described, although the word "modest" has been used on other occasions. However, it is a sensible move. It will not hit the supermarket or the hypermarket that sells petrol as well as groceries and drink. It will not hinder those existing stores that sell a wide range of goods in rural areas. It will help to stop the tendency of roadside cafes, which hitherto have served sandwiches and cups of tea, from selling drinks as well. Cafes or small restaurants attached to garages are becoming an increasing feature of our road network, and that is beginning to create a problem. Small chains of roadside cafes are now selling alcoholic as well as non-alcoholic drinks, but selling alcohol in premises designed for the motorist will create problems.

The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) accepted that garages adjoining motorways should not sell alcoholic drinks. I am sure that the Minister with responsibility for roads and traffic, who is here tonight, would be quick to remind us that the majority of accidents involving casualties and fatalities do not take place on motorways. By allowing or encouraging motorists going on holiday or on short trips to stop at licensed roadside cafes attached to garages we might create more problems in future.

I agree with the Minister that if we accept the Lords amendment we will be able to send out a signal about the dangers of associating driving with drinking. We should always be aware of the problems. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) pointed out the very serious and real problems of drinking and driving. About 1,500 people a year are killed, and each month about 8,000 people are found guilty of driving while over the limit. Those are extremely frightening figures. We should not allow that figure to increase, and this modest amendment is a step in that direction. That figure does not include those people who do not get caught but who are potential causes of accidents and potential killers because they drive while over the limit.

The sooner that random breath tests are introduced the better. It is not possible to amend this legislation to include measures of that kind, but I welcome the amendment and the Government's change of heart. It will be a small contribution, but we should accept it.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), at end insert—

'(2) Where, apart from this subsection, a justices' licence (within the meaning of the principal Act) would become void on the coming into force of subsection (1) above, the premises to which the licence is attached shall be treated as premises which are not disqualified for receiving such a licence by section 9 (4A) of that Act for so long as they continue to be premises for which such a licence is in force.'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 8 to 17 agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c).

MINORS' CONTRACTS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Minors' Contracts (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 16 March, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Neath General Hospital

1.27 pm

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): I beg leave to present a petition. The petition, in the name of Harold D. Thomas of 17 Leonard street, Neath, mayor of the borough of Neath, supported by 28,975 persons whose names appear on the electoral register of the borough of Neath, reads:

To the Honourable Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the inhabitants and residents of the Borough of Neath in the County of West Glamorgan Sheweth

That the West Glamorgan Health Authority wishes to close the existing General Hospital in Neath and to construct a replacement hospital at Baglan Moors, Port Talbot.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House call upon the Secretary of State for Wales to either

(a) hold a public inquiry to consider the merit of situating the new hospital at Baglan Moors.

or

(b) require the West Glamorgan Area Health Authority to construct the hospital at Cadoxton in Neath.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Occult Societies

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

1.28 am

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The purpose of securing this debate is threefold. First, I wish to warn parents to be vigilant and to impress upon their children the dangers of dabbling in black magic and other obscure occults. Secondly, I wish to call on all Christians to unite in prayer, word and deed to condemn Satanism and to provide kind and special support for those possessed by the devil who turn to the Church for help. Thirdly, it is necessary to ensure that the Home Office is aware of and alert to the rapid growth in the United Kingdom of black witchcraft and Satanism.

The fear of the devil is being put into children's minds, and that is evil. This black magic influence is so strong and dangerous that the power and command over adults and children is total. Disgusting ceremonies are held, in which children are sexually abused by Satanists. Paedophiles are joining such groups because they have found yet another way to get their hands on children whom they know will be too terrified to talk. It is within my knowledge that children who have escaped are under treatment and are still receiving psychiatric care and help from their local priests.

There have been other disturbing reports recently of the desecration of 100-year-old tombs. Bodies have been removed, heads cut off and fingers sliced away. Coffins have appeared at dawn on cemetery roads. In another location, 250 miles away, graves have been dug up. People have been charged under the Burial Act and the truth may never be established, but many local people are convinced that it was the black magic occult.

How can we be sure that our facts are accurate? Having spoken to parents who have alleged that their children have been assaulted, and knowing that police charges have been brought against several accused recently, we must await the court hearings, because of the sub judice rules. Other cases involving over 20 children alone have been brought to my notice and are under investigation. A child's diary confirmed the parents' fears, and interviews with children have been tape recorded.

Librarians have written to advise me that books on black magic and the occult are in great demand. Magazines on witchcraft and black magic are being used for contact advertisements. Videos on black magic are being made in abundance and hire shops report constant requests for such material. Shops selling witchcraft regalia or paraphernalia are springing up. Vicars, priests and preachers have contacted me, expressing support and deep concern. Hundreds of letters arrive each day supporting my efforts, and some provide new information. It is nearly impossible for me to reply to so many, but I intend to try.

In the city of Leeds alone there is to be found the Flashmail order centre of The Sorcerer's Apprentice. Just up the hill there is a large store called Astonishing Books, under the same control. This business is founded on books on witchcraft, black magic, Satanic rituals and other occult practices. On sale are false altar images, such as a Phoenician goddess statuette, a Satan skull ring and many others things.

The growth of this business and other such shops reinforces my warning that we could soon follow the path of the United States of America. Some felt that I had exaggerated the scale of the problem and were very amused when I suggested that witchcraft was nationwide. Since then witches have written from every corner of the United Kingdom to advise and warn me. Only today a rural dean has written to tell me of the distress inflicted on his family and to reinforce my campaign with first-hand experience. Children were sexually and mentally assaulted in that case. In a telephone conversation with his wife today, the harrowing chapter of events was revealed. Those involved have not fully recovered to this day. This week I have received the testimony on tape of a former witch who has turned to Christianity for love and support. Another lady became steeped in clairvoyancy from the age of 10 and has found peace of mind only through turning to Christianity.

The Witchcraft Act 1735 was repealed and replaced by the Fraudulent Mediums Act 1951. I shall be interested to learn how many convictions have been brought and have succeeded under that Act over 37 years. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will write to me, because I cannot expect him to provide such information now. The provisions of the 1951 Act would be unlikely to check the spread of witchcraft, Satanism and other worrying occults. The defence would say that reward was not involved. Strictly speaking, it seems to me that the Act is tailored to control spiritualists, clairvoyants and those practising telepathy.

Never again can it be claimed that our Law Officers are unaware of the growing menace. I have now warned Parliament, and that warning is duly recorded in the *Official Report* of our proceedings. It is my intention in a few weeks' time to hand a dossier to the Home Office, compiled by Childwatch and me. We must then discuss how best to proceed to safeguard children. There will not be an easy answer, but we may learn from discussions with certain American states. It is certain that black witchcraft and Satanism will not go away unless we unite to drive it away.

1.36 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) on securing this Adjournment debate. I share, as I am sure does the whole House, a deep concern for the welfare of children. If my hon. Friend has evidence that certain organisations and individuals are indulging in practices that are harmful to children, it is only right that he should bring up the matter. I understand from what he has said that in a few weeks he will forward to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary a dossier compiled by him and by the organisation which is assisting him.

It is a basic tenet of an open society such as ours that a person must be free to hold the beliefs that he or she wishes, as I am sure my hon. Friend agrees, but that principle is certainly modified by a clear requirement that any acts arising from such beliefs must be within the bounds of the criminal law, and I know that I have my hon. Friend's agreement on that point.

If an organisation indulges in practices that are demonstrably harmful to others or incites anyone to do so, that is a serious matter and the Government would treat it seriously. For all of us, freedom means freedom from oppression and brutality and, above all, from physical or

mental abuse. In those circumstances, the law can intervene. The law provides protection for individuals, especially for those least able to protect themselves—children. A wide range of offences already exists to deal with every form of ill-treatment and physical and sexual abuse of children. Serious and severe punishments are laid down for those who abuse children in this way.

Tackling the problem of child abuse goes beyond the Home Department's responsibilities. Indeed, it goes beyond the responsibilities of any official body. The law cannot expect to provide protection in a void. We must look to others as well. Parents, schools and all those who have a responsibility for children's welfare must play their part. But we must provide where those responsibilities are not met.

Children at risk can be taken into care or into a place of safety. We are always conscious of the need to do everything that we can to ensure that any cases of child abuse do not slip through the net, including the cases to which my hon. Friend alluded. One of the steps that we are taking is to encourage the police to work with the social services in the investigation of such cases.

I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that parents and schools should introduce children at an early age to the rich tradition of religious experience and also warn them clearly and explicitly against the perversion of religious and personal beliefs by witchcraft and other cults.

No aspect of criminal law is set and immovable. It must be monitored regularly, and we must ensure that it does what it sets out to do. In the case of these offences, such reviews are particularly important. We must be alert to the need to amend and strengthen the law, if necessary, and we have been doing just that. The Criminal Law Revision Committee was asked to consider the law on assaults and sexual offences. It concluded that there were significant gaps in the protection afforded to children by the criminal law. I share that general view, but that is not to say that important changes cannot and should not be made.

For example, the Sexual Offences Act 1985 increased the maximum penalty for indecent assault on a young girl from five years' to 10 years' imprisonment. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 makes a husband or wife a compellable witness where the spouse is accused of a sexual or violent offence against a child under 16. The Criminal Justice Bill, a most important measure currently before the House, proposes a number of important reforms. As my hon. Friend knows—I have his support on this—a particularly significant reform is that it will be an offence to possess photographs, films or videos of an indecent nature involving children.

The law comes down hard on those people who abuse children where convictions can be secured. We are constantly monitoring and strengthening the criminal law. Abuse undoubtedly occurs in the course of certain practices. When such practices and abuse are reported to the police and convictions are secured, there are severe penalties for those who have been found guilty.

Any evidence of the practices described by my hon. Friend must, first and foremost, be taken up with the police and any dossier, such as that promised by my hon. Friend, should be presented to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

I should like to deal briefly with two other matters. The first relates to my hon. Friend's request for the number of people convicted under the Fraudulent Mediums Act 1951. He is right in his supposition that I am not able to provide those figures tonight. I do not have quite the fingertip control of the statistics that I should have, but I shall look into the issue and, if possible, provide the information that he wants.

The second matter concerns my hon. Friend's point about the disgusting and appalling desecration of graves and coffins. I shall consider the issue of improper rituals on sacred ground. The desecration of graves and such activities are distasteful to everyone, particularly the relatives of those whose coffins have been interfered with. The law exists to deal with such acts. Grave robbing is an offence against the common law. There are various enactments which cover riotous or violent behaviour in places of worship, churchyards and burial grounds. The 1977 order that applies to local authority cemeteries prohibits any disturbance or nuisance in a cemetery or interference with graves, vaults or tombstones. Even quite minor damage to a tombstone can be caught under the Criminal Damage Act 1971. Those who commit such acts can be properly punished if they are caught, and I share my hon. Friend's desire that that should be the position.

I hope that I have made it clear that the Government are keenly aware of the need to consider amendments to the law, if it appears necessary to do so, to give children full and effective protection beyond that which already exists. If my hon. Friend has material that he believes shows that such amendment is necessary, we shall consider it extremely carefully.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 April 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 5 May.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 5 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Unlicensed Black Taxi System (Belfast)

1. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take action to stop the unlicensed black taxi system in Belfast.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): All taxis operating in Belfast are licensed either as public hire or private hire taxis.

Mr. Bowis: It has long been known that the black taxi system in Belfast has provided financial support for terrorism in that city and the Province. As we now have gruesome evidence of its involvement in terrorism and in the recent murder of two British soldiers, will my hon. Friend take steps to ensure that that particularly unacceptable form of transport system is hounded out of the centre of Belfast, for the protection of all its citizens?

Mr. Needham: We are aware of the connection between paramilitary organisations in both communities and black taxis, although there are many black taxi operators in Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland who do a very good job. The Chief Constable has established an anti-rackets squad to deal with rackets generally in Northern Ireland, and that is a high priority. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is bringing forward provisions in a new prevention of terrorism Bill which we hope will go a long way towards knocking out all forms of rackets in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Is it not a fact that these battlewagons, as some of these black taxis have become, contributed largely to the appalling murders of two British soldiers? They are not simply used for monetary gain, but as battlewagons. Such activities should be stamped out. If some innocent people suffer, it is better than innocent lives being lost.

Mr. Needham: As my hon. Friend is probably aware, two taxi drivers and the chairman of the Falls Road Taxi Association have been charged with offences in connection with those horrific murders. Clearly, any such misuse of taxis is absolutely disgraceful, but my job as the Minister for the environment is to ensure that both public and private hire taxis are properly licensed and controlled. Nevertheless, as my hon. Friend said, the police must be given the powers to ensure that they stop any terrorist or paramilitary activity by black taxi operations or their drivers.

Irish Foreign Minister

2. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Irish Foreign Minister; and what was discussed.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I last met Mr. Lenihan on 25 March at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference. The joint statement

issued after the meeting, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, sets out the wide range of matters that we discussed.

Mr. Mullin: Who authorised the execution of the three IRA members killed in Gibraltar?

Mr. King: I trust that the hon. Gentleman is sufficiently well informed to know that the events in Gibraltar will be the subject of a full inquest before a jury. It is absolutely intolerable to make such comments in advance of the proper process of the law.

Rev. Ian Paisley: When the Secretary of State next meets Mr. Lenihan, what message will he give him for Mr. Haughey? Will he give the message given by the Foreign Secretary commending Mr. Haughey as a true and great patriot, or will he give the denunciation by the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box on Tuesday?

Mr. King: I shall have great pleasure in endorsing the messages of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary when I next meet Mr. Haughey. I see no difficulty in that whatsoever. I should not have thought that there was any hon. Member who would not regard Mr. Haughey as a true patriot for his own country, or who would deny that we look for the fullest co-operation, not least in the defeat of terrorism and in the fight against the common evil represented by terrorism in the island of Ireland. We look for the fullest co-operation, and that is enshrined in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Mallon: When the Secretary of State next meets the Irish Foreign Minister, will he confirm to him that the statesmanlike views expressed by the Foreign Secretary represent the views of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet? If that is the case, will he then confirm to the Irish Foreign Minister that the petulant display by the Prime Minister at Question Time on Tuesday was the result of irrational pique rather than rational political judgment?

Mr. King: I suspect that they are what one might call two sides of the spectrum. There is some attempt to divide my right hon. Friends, but we are together on these matters. We share a common approach. I would say seriously to the hon. Gentleman that if he reads the speech by the Foreign Secretary he will see that my right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that the agreement that we have signed carries commitments and responsibilities on both sides and involves obligations on both sides. It is not part of a process sliding towards somewhere else, but, in the phrase that I have used, it is an end in itself. It is a resolution of the difficulties that have bedevilled the relationship of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, and any change in that relationship will be subject to the democratic decision of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanbrook: Has my right hon. Friend discussed with the Irish Foreign Minister the Irish Parliament's unilateral imposition of restrictions on extradition from the Republic to the United Kingdom on the unjustified ground of concern for the quality of British justice and spurious concern for the rights of so-called Irish citizens who are extradited to Britain? If so, what is the Government's reaction to that unilateral restriction on the due legal process between our two countries?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend will know that he picks up an extract from the speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, in which he says that there is no monopoly of grievance. He made no secret in that speech of our grievances about the way in which the extradition issue has been handled, but he said that we seek to resolve such problems within the normal relationships between our countries. I certainly confirm to my hon. Friend that I am most anxious, as I am sure all those responsible within the Republic of Ireland must be, to ensure that there are, at the earliest moment, effective extradition arrangements between our two countries.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister realise that the rabble-rousing and jingoistic answer that he gave me last time I asked about the shooting of the three IRA members has intensified the situation and that there have been more killings in the past few weeks than for a long time? Does he realise that shooting to kill demands an inquiry and that the tactics used by paramilitaries on both sides of just killing should not have been adopted by us when we could have arrested the three IRA members? We should not engage in the same tactics.

Mr. King: I do not immediately recall what the hon. Gentleman described as my jingoistic answer. I think that I may have expressed some considerable relief, which I think the House shared, that the most powerful bomb that the Spanish police had ever seen in their lifetime, despite all their experience of ETA, did not go off in the confined streets of Gibraltar. There cannot be any decent Member of the House who is not profoundly relieved that some 200 people who might otherwise have been killed or maimed did not meet their death or injury at that time. The hon. Gentleman says that there needs to be an inquiry, and he will have heard my earlier answer that there is to be precisely that in the due legal form of an inquest before a jury. That is the proper procedure, and that is what will take place.

Mr. Hayes: When my right hon. Friend next sees the Irish Foreign Minister, will he ask him whether he is as fed up as Conservative Members are of television companies raking through the gutters of Gibraltar to find people to rubbish our security services? Will he also ask him whether he is as fed up as we are with people weeping tears for an active IRA unit which would have been responsible for a major massacre in Gibraltar?

Mr. King: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the proposals for a television broadcast, which I understand may take place tonight. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has made representations to the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority about that. If the reports are correct that the programme will include live interviews with people who are likely to be witnesses at the inquest, that raises very difficult issues and could run the serious risk of prejudicing the rights of those concerned at the inquest.

Mr. McNamara: Many people are worried that instead of three people facing the prospect of spending a long time behind bars for taking part in and planning a most horrific offence, the Government may well have created three new martyrs for old Ireland, three more victims for the Crown. The Opposition share that worry. Is the Secretary of State aware that we very much regret the Foreign Secretary's decision to go to the chairman of the IBA to try to prevent

the film being shown? Is he aware that we regard that as another example of the ministerial arm-twisting of the press and the media that we have seen since Christmas?

Is the Secretary of State also aware that by seeking to take that course of action the Government are prejudging the issues because, according to the very words that the Secretary of State used himself, that bomb was 50 miles away? The three were unarmed. Those are the facts. They should have been arrested and charged. The Government have created martyrs and they are now trying to prevent a proper examination of the Government's conduct and policies by hiding behind the theory of an inquest. We well know that there will be no examination in that inquest of the decisions made at Cabinet level about how those men and that women were to be treated. The Government are hiding behind the facts. They are running away again.

Mr. King: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I believe that that was the most unfortunate intervention that I have ever heard. He has presumed to stand at the Dispatch Box —speaking, I understand, on behalf of the Opposition— and say that he claims to know all the facts of this matter in advance of the inquest and the evidence. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will have heard the hon. Gentleman say that he knows all the facts. The hon. Gentleman has—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Opposition Front Bench spokesman asked a series of questions. He is now being answered.

Mr. King: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that those were the facts. I must tell him that, as we have said, there will be an inquest. Does he really think that it is desirable in the proper process of law and for the protection of all those who have their rights who will be giving evidence in one form or another at the inquest, that there should in advance of that inquest be trial by television in which partial witnesses will be shown in support of one particular thesis? The hon. Gentleman should consider the facts. He will hear later that a considerable amount of independent examination of these matters can be quoted to show how dangerous it is for witnesses to give evidence on television before inquiries and inquests are carried out.

Economic Prospects

4. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet trades union representatives in Northern Ireland to discuss economic prospects; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): My right hon. Friend and I have no outstanding arrangements to meet trades union representatives, though we have met them on a number of occasions in the past to discuss economic prospects and other issues. We value these meetings.

Mr. Marshall: Is the Minister aware that trade union leaders in Northern Ireland are concerned about the Government's prevarication over Kilroot phase 2, and does he accept their point that the economic logic of it is irrefutable? Is he aware that their feeling now is that the only reason for any further debate is the Government's desire to privatise Northern Ireland electricity, and that this represents the triumph of political expediency over the economic interests of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Viggers: No, that is not the case, and the decision on the future generation of electricity in Northern Ireland will be taken in the interests of the consumer and of the economy as a whole. The results of an investment appraisal of the proposals for the next phase of generating capacity are currently being considered. Decisions will be taken as soon as possible, in the interests of the consumer and the economy as a whole.

Sir John Farr: When my hon. Friend is considering these matters, will he bear carefully in mind the great importance that is attached to the order placed with Harland and Wolff by Mr. Ravi Tikkoo for the Ultimate Dream? If this order is not to be built at Harland and Wolff, will not the opportunities now presented to Belfast be missed, which would be a matter of great regret?

Mr. Viggers: The concept produced by Harland and Wolff is imaginative and ambitious, but I have to put my hon. Friend right. It is not an order but a conceptual design at this stage, and no detailed costings have been produced. When they are, we shall study them carefully.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister give an undertaking that this project will be viewed sympathetically, rather than Parliamentary Private Secretaries going around rebuking Conservative Members who have supported the early-day motion asking that Government funds should be made available, as they will help not only Northern Ireland but the United Kingdom as a whole?

Mr. Viggers: I assure the hon. Gentleman that this matter will be viewed sympathetically, and he will be the first to agree that the Government have been very supportive of Harland and Wolff over many years. In appraising this project we shall, when the time comes, have to take account of the resources that will be required to support the building of the ship and compare these with the resources that will be required and should be made available for use elsewhere in the Province.

Mr. Peter Robinson: If the question of shipbuilding arises in the Minister's talks with trade union leaders, will he assure them that the Government's aim is not to be neutral when it comes to getting the order for Harland and Wolff, but is positively to encourage that order to come to Northern Ireland, for the benefit not only of those in the Harland and Wolff shipyard but of the suppliers and sub-contractors in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman would not be fair if he accused the Government of not being supportive of Harland and Wolff. We have been extremely supportive and have fought hard to bring orders for the Harland and Wolff shipyard, including the AOR order for the Ministry of Defence. We shall be supportive, but we are bound by the EC sixth directive, and, as I said earlier, by the need to compare the resources that will be required for the building of the ship with the availability of resources which can be used elsewhere in the Province.

Mr. Alton: The Minister said that he would exercise virement within the Northern Ireland budget—in other words, robbing Peter to pay Paul if the project goes ahead.

Will he give an undertaking that new resources will be found from outside the Northern Ireland budget to enable this project to go ahead and to ensure that there is fair employment for both parts of the community, and recognise that people throughout the United Kingdom will benefit if the order goes ahead?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the United Kingdom, and it is appropriate to bear in mind the needs of all shipbuilders in the United Kingdom, because the United Kingdom is one country. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Northern Ireland block is available for the development of resources within Northern Ireland, and it would not be appropriate to expect the United Kingdom Government to find resources over and above those of the Northern Ireland block for the support of one individual project.

Integrated Education

5. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards integrated education, in the light of the education reform document he recently published.

10. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the plans to implement his Department's support for integrated education.

The Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): It has been the Government's long-standing policy to support viable proposals for the creation of integrated schools in Northern Ireland. We have now sought to give further opportunity for the expression of parental wishes and new impetus to the development of integrated education through our proposals for grant-maintained integrated schools.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome my hon. Friend's answer, but will he confirm yet again that policies that lead to integrated education are probably the most beneficial long-term initiatives that the Government can take? Will he also assure the House that such policies will not be imposed by the Government, but will be brought about by patiently getting the co-operation and good will of all the communities in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I can confirm the Government's commitment to the expansion of integrated education in Northern Ireland and give my hon. Friend the assurance that the proposals in the consultation paper in no sense reflect a determination to impose integrated education. Rather, they provide an option for parents to choose if they so wish.

Mr. Alton: I congratulate the Minister on a brave initiative. It is a worthwhile step towards bringing about harmony and long-term development of the community in Northern Ireland. May I recall to him the report in the *Belfast Telegraph* of 25 February, which said that accommodation, equipment and book supplies at integrated schools are inadequate? Will the Minister say whether that can now be rectified?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said and for his continued support for the concept of integrated education in Northern Ireland. The allocation of funds to integrated schools that receive funds from my Department is on the same basis as that for the funds that are made available to other schools in the Province. There is no discrimination in resource allocation.

Mr. Kilfedder: The Minister is aware of the campaign that I have waged for 20 years to end the sectarian divide in education in Northern Ireland *[Interruption.]* Will we have to wait another 20 years or more before we see an end to it? I know that the SDLP disagrees with my wish to see the bringing together of Protestant and Roman Catholic young children. Is it right that the taxpayer should have to pay for two separate systems of education that cruelly divide the children and waste taxpayers' money?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sorry that some hon. Members on the Opposition Benches laughed when the hon. Gentleman mentioned his very creditable campaign over many years to promote the concept of integrated education. The people of the Province owe him a great debt for doing that. I make it clear that the number of integrated schools that will emerge from the proposals is not a matter for me. In the first instance it is a matter for the House and the other place to determine by legislation. When that legislation is in place, it will be a matter for the parents. The Government are seeking to facilitate those parents who would like to have their children educated in the same classroom as children from the other side of the community. That is an important commitment by the Government. We are rightly pleased to offer it to the people of the Province, and we do it with conviction.

Mr. William Ross: The Minister talks about greater parental choice and about integrating schools. Will he bear in mind that the geographical distribution of schools in Northern Ireland reflects the geographical distribution of the pupils who attend those schools? As soon as he starts interfering with the pool of pupils, that could have very severe and unforeseen effects on the viability of many schools, especially in the more sparsely populated rural areas. Will the Minister carefully bear that in mind?

Dr. Mawhinney: Of course I shall bear that in mind, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I am not interfering. I am facilitating those parents who may choose to have their children educated in this way. That is a very important distinction. It is absolutely right that integrated education, certainly in the foreseeable future, is not the answer to the problems of the Province. Because of the housing arrangements that the hon. Gentleman mentions, it would be difficult to see integrated schools developing in many areas of the Province in the immediate future. I recognise that fact, and I also recognise that some rural schools in isolated areas will need some protection. He will know that, as a matter of policy, the Department has already made it clear that it will offer protection to schools in rural and isolated areas. Having said all that, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that he still does not advance any reason why parents should not be given the option of integrated education if they wish to follow it.

Ms. Mowlam: In view of the overwhelming number of complaints that were received about lack of time for consultation prior to the introduction of the Education Reform Bill in England and Wales, will the Minister please explain how he can contemplate 41 school days as

sufficient time for consultation on a document which, in his own words, will change the nature of education in Northern Irish schools well into the next century?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, it gives me pleasure to welcome the hon. Lady to her new responsibilities. We look forward to working with her in future.

The hon. Lady will know that a two-month consultation period was made available in England and Wales. She will also know that I not only made available a two-month consultation period, but, because the paper was launched at the beginning of the Easter school holidays, added a further three weeks for consultation. The hon. Lady will also bear in mind that the proposals —or at least many of them—have not come as a great surprise to the people of Northern Ireland. They have been widely debated over months as progress has been made on the Bill in the House. For all those reasons, I believe that the consultation time was perfectly adequate.

Security

6. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement concerning the security situation in Northern Ireland.

9. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 24 March, two part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and a regular soldier have been murdered by the Provisional IRA.

The security threat remains high, but the courageous and determined efforts of the security forces are continuing to yield results.

Since the beginning of the year a total of 103 people have been charged with serious offences, including five with murder and six with attempted murder. A total of 272 weapons, just over 65,000 rounds of ammunition, and approximately 2,700 lb of explosives have been recovered in Northern Ireland. I understand also that the Garda Siochana has recovered some 174 weapons, almost 126,000 rounds of ammunition, and 600 lb of commercial explosives.

Rev. Paisley: Is the Secretary of State aware that the people of Northern Ireland are deeply concerned at the two recent murders? On behalf of the people for whom I speak, I express my sympathy to the family in Mid-Ulster and to the family in England who have been so tragically bereaved.

Has the Secretary of State information that the murder of Mr. Gibson, a member of the UDR, was an inside job? Can he confirm that another member of the UDR was to do the job that Mr. Gibson was killed doing? Is he aware that that member of the UDR was told by the security forces not to report for duty? Is he aware that another man, not in sympathy with the UDR, was to take his place, and that that man did not turn up? Therefore, Mr. Gibson was put into the position of having to do the job, and he was then murdered. Is he aware that the car that was used by the murderers was supposed to be in the possession of people who were away for the day, but had left their keys in it? Does that not indicate a well-organised and orchestrated inside job in Cookstown to kill members of the UDR?

Mr. Tom King: I certainly entirely share the feelings that were expressed by the hon. Member about the killings and about the earlier killing, at a farm sale, of another part-time member of the UDR. Although there certainly were some rather surprising features about the killing of Mr. Gibson, in that he had only just gone on that round that day, I certainly do not have any of the information that the hon. Member has conveyed to the House on this occasion.

Mr. Molyneaux: In the House on Tuesday, the Prime Minister said that the Government would continue to press for effective security co-operation across the border. Why should it now be necessary to press for delivery of the one and only promise that was made by the Dublin Government when the Agreement was signed two and a half years ago?

Mr. King: In her answer the Prime Minister made clear the importance that we attach to continual work to improve cross-border security co-operation. The right hon. Gentleman will have heard the answer that I gave. He will have heard also of the substantial arms seizures and recoveries of ammunition and explosives that have been achieved by the Garda Siochana. Obviously, we and everybody in Northern Ireland must take great comfort from the fact that those weapons of death have now been recovered from terrorist clutches. It is a continual process, and in the answer that I gave earlier I emphasised the importance that we attach to the continual improvement in every possible way of cross-border security co-operation.

Mr. Budgen: As it was said that the security situation would be much improved by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will my right hon. Friend comment on the recent important and clearly well-considered speech by Mr Haughey to Fianna Fail supporters in New York? Does he agree that that clearly repudiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and will he please dissociate himself from the Foreign Secretary's offensive and patronising attempt to depict Mr. Haughey as some minor figure who did not understand what he was saying?

Mr. King: I am afraid that I did not notice whether my hon. Friend was in the Chamber, but I answered that question a little earlier and made absolutely clear the position of the Government on these matters.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the purpose of an inquest is to establish the cause of death, not to conduct a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the cause of death? Secondly, regarding the amazing series of events that began with the appalling statement in the House by the Attorney-General that certain people are above the rule of law, I am glad to see that he now at least comes in during Northern Ireland questions to hear people talk about the consequences of what he said on that day. In the light of that statement, the decision of the Department of Defence that when a soldier is given a life sentence for murder that sentence is two and a half years, and the Gibraltar affair, which is now surrounded by more controversy and which led to the Greek tragedy of the funerals in Belfast, will the Secretary of State confirm that, given the tensions and anger that those events created, the Irish Prime Minister showed commendable restraint? Will he advise his colleague the Prime Minister to read Mr. Haughey's speeches in the

United States and to take not the advice of the rent-a-headline hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) but to take instead his advice and that of his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, who were appointed to conduct relations with the Irish Government, among other things?

Mr. King: The hon. Member has rehearsed what we all know of the catalogue of events in recent months. I take great exception to a number of the descriptions that he has given; for example, the suggestion that anybody is above the rule of law. That is simply not true, since people have already been prosecuted for murder for the events that he described, and my right hon. and learned Friend came to the House to report very fully to this sovereign Parliament the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. In no sense are these people, or any people in Northern Ireland, above the law. The hon. Member surely realises that there is no benefit, if we are trying to establish better co-operation and to work together to defeat the terrorists, in rehearsing old grievances. Rather, we should try to work together in a positive and constructive way.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the security situation in Northern Ireland would be more satisfactory if convicted terrorists served the full term of their sentences rather than enjoying a substantial remission?

Mr. King: I certainly look to a situation in which those convicted of serious terrorist crimes face proper retribution in terms of the sentences that they are given. I have no comment to make today on remission system.

Mr. McNamara: We on the Opposition Benches rejoice in the finding of arms and the conviction of prisoners under the rule of law for terrorists in Northern Ireland. Following the Prime Minister's statement to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on Tuesday, can the Secretary of State say whether the Government of the Irish Republic have been more, or less, stinting in their efforts to defeat the men of violence in the past few months; whether there has been any effective break in co-operation across the border; and why, in view of the Taoiseach's statement in Dublin on his arrival from New York—before the Prime Minister's made her observations—which was published widely in the press, to the effect that the Irish Government would work the mechanism of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to the full, the Prime Minister felt it necessary to say that she would seek reassurances from the Irish Government and that they were backing away from their responsibilities under the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Does the Secretary of State really think that that helps? Is not the spirit of what the Foreign Secretary said at Derby a much better way of trying to conduct affairs between both our countries?

Mr. King: I have already said to hon. Members, and I shall make it clear again, that the reply of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary made absolutely clear our commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is not a case of something in which some matters are more important than others. Both countries have their responsibilities, obligations and commitments. We seek to make the agreement work to the full, and we make no secret of the fact that we attach particular importance, for very good reason, to the closest possible co-operation in the fight against terrorism. Unless it is defeated, there is no sensible and safe future for people on the island of Ireland, whether north or south of the border.

Political Parties (Talks)

7. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about his latest talks with Northern Ireland political leaders.

Mr. Tom King: Following my earlier meetings with the leaders of the two main Unionist parties I have now had two meetings with the leadership of the Social Democratic and Labour party. I hope to hold a further meeting with the Unionist leaders shortly. My purpose in these talks is to establish whether a basis exists for a wider dialogue about the future government of Northern Ireland.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is not the Ulster Unionist difficulty over all this and over the possibility of talking to Mr. Haughey the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which also presents problems to a patriotic Taoiseach? Will the Government make use of the November review of the Intergovernmental Conference to transform this unequal agreement into an equal treaty of full partnership? Let the flawed agreement wither, and get down to business.

Mr. King: I do not see it as my role to dwell on the difficulties that may be faced by Unionists and Nationalists. It is easy to find difficulties in Northern Ireland in every direction. I am trying to see whether we can find a constructive way forward in which people in the Province can take more responsibility for the government of the Province. It is important not to dwell on difficulties but to find ways in which men of good will can work together.

Mr. Madden: Does the Secretary of State agree that there will be no prospects of any improvement in the political or security position if people throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic believe that the British Government are seeking to gag and silence the media and are colluding in the propagation of misinformation? Does he understand that it is entirely disingenuous to compare an inquest with a full public inquiry? As the chairman of the IBA is believed to have told the Foreign Secretary to get stuffed, will the Secretary of State now give an assurance that the Government will not seek an injunction and will allow people throughout the whole United Kingdom to know the truth about what happened recently in Gibraltar?

Mr. King: I am interested to hear that the hon. Gentleman believes that the correct way to arrive at the truth is by a television broadcast in advance of the proper procedure of the inquest, at which all witnesses involved have an opportunity to give their evidence before a jury under the rules of procedure that pertain in Gibraltar. I should have thought that to seek to pre-empt that and to present one side of an argument through trial by television would worry every hon. Member who is anxious to see that people's rights are protected and that justice is done.

Mr. Gow: Does my right hon. Friend recall the words,

"In the absence of devolved government, we will seek to establish one or more elected regional councils with a wide range of powers over local services."?
Have not nine years elapsed since those words appeared in our manifesto? If the policy was right when it was fashioned by Airey Neave, why is it wrong today? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that any constitutional changes in Northern Ireland with regard to local government there can be introduced, even though opposed by the Irish Republic?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend knows well that I am at the moment seeking to initiate discussions with the principal constitutional parties within the Province and have made it absolutely clear that I am prepared to listen to any propositions that any may seek to put forward and consider what alternative approaches might be adopted. I am not able to comment further to my hon. Friend on the reasons why those earlier comments were not pursued.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Pike: If the Prime Minister agrees with the words of the Minister replying to yesterday's debate to the effect that the Government were making only "modest adjustments", and not major concessions, will she recognise the case of a constituent of mine? She is 79-years-old, living in a private old people's home, with a pension of £41·71 a week. She has been trying to sell her house, valued at £7,500, for 17 months but is unable to do so. She is not helped by yesterday's decision. Will the Prime Minister accept that more problems were created than were solved yesterday? What is that old lady going to do, and what are the Government going to do about it?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, it has been my experience that when hon. Members raise personal cases in the House, which used virtually never to be done at Question Time, there is very rarely or never a full statement of the facts. The cases must be taken up with the Minister concerned.

With regard to the announcement yesterday, bearing in mind that the amount spent on housing benefit was £5,200 million, and the amount at the end of yesterday was £5,300 million, I think that, a "modest adjustment", but effective to deal with the problems, is indeed a proper description of what took place.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to read the pamphlet, "The Crisis in Religious Education", expressing grave concern at the trend towards multi-faith education in our schools? Will she reaffirm her Government's commitment to the teaching of Christianity to all the children in our schools?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, in the Education Act 1944 religious education was made compulsory and the syllabus was to be determined by a committee drawn up locally. Most of us believe, and I think it is borne out by the debates of that time, that the reference there to religious education was predominantly but not exclusively, to the scriptures of the Bible, and are somewhat concerned that that has not altogether been carried out. I understand that there will be a debate in another place and that those views may be very well ventilated.

Mr. Kinnock: In answer to a parliamentary question yesterday the Prime Minister told the House that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was what she called the lead Minister on exchange rates. Can she please tell us who is the lead Minister on benefit rates at the moment?

The Prime Minister: As I said in the reply to that question, our policies are policies of the Government as a whole, and very successful they are.

Mr. Kinnock: I am sorry that the Prime Minister cannot tell us who is the lead Minister on benefit rates, because I read in the *Daily Mail* this morning that the Prime Minister alone was responsible for the U-turn yesterday, and I wanted to give full credit where it was due. As the Prime Minister appears to have some responsibility in these matters, and as the savings on housing benefit were to have been £640 million, before the £100 million announcement yesterday, could she tell us who will now lose that £540 million? Will they not be people who until this month were considered too poor to pay any rates and who now, regardless of their ability to pay, are having to pay 20 per cent. of their rates?

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for congratulating the entire Government on successful economic policies—so successful that we have the best social security policies that any Government have ever had. Everyone benefits—even Opposition Members have benefited during the lifetime of this Government.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister not yet understand, when she goes on about the matters to which she has just referred and the £46 billion, that the people who are losing are not concerned about the £46 billion that the right hon. Lady is spending on others, but are concerned about the £4, £6 and £10 a week that she is taking away from them? If things are so good, why are they so bad?

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. Gentleman cannot understand is that things are good and he knows full well that they are good, because the economy is run extremely well and the total amount spent on social security and on health, as well as on things such as provision for Members of Parliament, far exceeds anything previously achieved.

Mr. Hind: Has my right hon. Friend received the thanks of Mr. Fletcher, an unemployed labourer from Middlesbrough, who has obtained a job as a printer following the advice that my right hon. Friend gave him when he threw his applications that had been rejected at her, to go to the Manpower Services Commission? Despite the attitude of the trade unions, will my right hon. Friend give similar advice to the thousands of unemployed workers in the north of England, to join the adult training scheme?

The Prime Minister: The House will remember that Mr. Fletcher tackled me personally before television cameras on a visit that I made to Teesside, saying that he had put in about 1,000 applications for jobs and had not got one. I advised him to go and get training with the Manpower Services Commission. He was very sceptical, but he was a very wise man—he took my advice and he found that it got him a job.

Mr. McCusker: Is the Prime Minister aware that a few moments ago the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland tried to tell me that what I had heard her say on Tuesday at Prime Minister's Question Time, when she expressed concern about the Prime Minister and Government of the Irish Republic, was identical to what the Foreign Secretary said at the weekend? Is that what she expected me to interpret her as having said?

The Prime Minister: Both of my right hon. Friends and I are concerned that the Anglo-Irish Agreement not only continues but is seen to work. A vital part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is the recognition by the Republic that the rights of the people in Northern Ireland would not be changed without the consent of the majority. It is an important part of the agreement, and the Republic accepted it. No doubt whatsoever should be cast upon it. That is the purpose of the various emphases placed upon that agreement and of the several comments that have been made by my right hon. Friends and me on the speeches of the Taoiseach.

Q2. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Haselhurst: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the confirmation by NATO Defence Ministers at their meeting in Brussels of the essential, continuing role of nuclear weapons in our defence and the need to keep them up to date? Against the background of the scale of Soviet forces and their activity, does my right hon. Friend agree that Britain must play her full part in that?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the NATO Defence Ministers have had a very successful meeting. A communiqué will be placed in the House shortly. The Ministers have agreed on guidance about the modernisation of those nuclear weapons. That full guidance, of course, is not published. The important thing is that the Ministers have agreed on the way ahead. It is important because the Soviet Union continues to modernise all her nuclear weapons other than those affected by the INF agreement, and we do the same. It is vital that the nuclear deterrent is kept modern and up to date and that our entire defence, including other nuclear weapons, is modernised and kept effective.

Q3. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Would the Prime Minister like to confirm the press notice from the Department of Health and Social Security this morning, which indicated that the unit that will administer the scheme announced by the Secretary of State for Social Services yesterday will not be in place until 1 July? Will she advise the various claimants what they will do until then? Will she also confirm that the changes announced yesterday will not alleviate the problems of two invalidity benefit recipients, Dorothy and Kenneth Ellis, who have also written to the Prime Minister, and who as a direct result of her decision to discontinue housing benefit supplement from 1 April will now be required to pay £6 a week extra for prescriptions?

The Prime Minister: In winding up the debate last night my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled made it quite clear that the unit will be in the DHSS and outlined the provisions that will be made in the meantime for our constituents.

Miss Emma Nicholson: May I thank the Prime Minister most warmly on behalf of state pensioners in my constituency who have saved all their working lives on modest wages and are delighted with the statement made by the Secretary of State yesterday?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that those modest changes were right and have caused a great deal of pleasure.

Q4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Williams: What does the Prime Minister have to say to a young man in my constituency who is unemployed, married and has three small children? He was on an income of £68·50 a week plus child benefit. He is now on an income of £69·45—an increase less than the rate of inflation. He is especially concerned about the change to the social fund, as he benefited from several single payments during the last year. Is it right to describe him and his family as gainers, when in fact they have lost in the annual uprating, they have lost in the uprating of child benefit and they will lose heavily over the setting up of the social fund?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must take up a detailed case with the special unit in the DHSS. It is a highly detailed case—*[Interruption.]* The other case was nothing to do with social security. The hon. Gentleman must take up this highly detailed case with the special unit that is to be set up, as I am sure he will. It is not possible to deal with it in this way. Sometimes there have been changes in housing benefit, many of them covered by the transitional protection announced yesterday. Frequently other changes in income support or family credit or changes with regard to the increased disability benefits are not mentioned by hon. Members, but are very relevant. Other matters have also to be taken into account, such as the previous local authority discretionary scheme. I hope that I have said enough to make it clear that it is not possible to deal with the case in this way.

Q5. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Burns: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Liberal-controlled Chelmsford borough council has increased its share of the rates this year by a staggering 36

per cent., while last year, when a general election was in the offing, it cut them by 13 per cent. Is she aware that Marconi in Chelmsford is faced with a rates bill of almost £6,000 more a week as a result? Does she agree that the sooner the business rate and the community charge are introduced, the sooner such highway robbery will be stopped and genuine help given to hard-pressed businesses and individuals alike?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend and I hope that the people of Chelmsford will draw the appropriate conclusions from those vivid figures. Certainly, once we have the new community charge and unified business rate in place it will be very much easier for people to judge the actions of their local authority against the actions of others. The whole of the new finance system is geared to ensuring that the same level of service, delivered at the same standard of efficiency, should result in the same community charge all over England—and separately all over Scotland—so that people can judge the efficiency and effectiveness of their local authority.

Q6. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pendry: Will the Prime Minister take time today to look afresh at the problems facing Members of Parliament arising from the lack of secretarial provision, particularly if many hon. Members, like myself, have to answer literally thousands of letters of protest about the Government's proposals? I have received hundreds of letters on social security, 2,000 on the poll tax, and many on health and transport cuts. In the interests of democracy and speedy replies to our constituents, will the Prime Minister give us more assistance for secretarial work or, better still, more palatable legislation?

The Prime Minister: No. Members of Parliament have never been better off, either for salary or secretarial assistance, than they are now. The hon. Gentleman has plenty of assistance to enable him to deal efficiently with his correspondence.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

TUESDAY 3 MAY—Consideration in Committee of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Proceedings on the Coroners Bill [Lords] which is a consolidation measure.

Motion relating to the First Scottish Standing Committee.

WEDNESDAY 4 MAY—Until about seven o'clock Second Reading of the Legal Aid Bill [Lords].

Followed by a debate on the Rover Group on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Afterwards consideration of Lords amendments to the Immigration Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill.

THURSDAY 5 MAY—There will be a debate on agriculture on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. Details of the EC documents relevant to the debate will be given in the *Official Report*.

Followed by remaining stages of the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill [Lords].

FRIDAY 6 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 9 MAY—Consideration in Committee of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

[Debate on Thursday 5 May

Relevant European Community documents:

(a) 4852/88 *(b) 4779/88* *(c) 4855/88* *(d) 5004/88*	*Agricultural Stabilisers, Land Set-Aside and Cessation of Farming*
(e) 5448/88 Add 1 & 2 & 3	*Agricultural Price Proposals*
(f) 4079/88	*Agricultural Markets 1987*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:

(a) HC 43-xix (1987-88), para 5
(b) HC 43-xix (1987-88), para 5
(c) HC 43-xix (1987-88), para 5
(d) HC 43-xix (1987-88), para 5
(e) HC 43-xxi (1987-88), para 3 & HC 43-xxii (1987-88) para 2
(f) HC 43-xvi (1987-88), para 4]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

In view of the conflicting stories about the establishment of the special unit at the DHSS, announced yesterday by the Secretary of State for Social Services, can the Leader of the House get the Secretary of State to come back to the House to make clear when the special unit will start work? Is it to be in two or three months' time, as some DHSS offices have indicated? What will be its job? How many civil servants will be employed? How can people who want to make claims get in touch with those civil servants?

As the crisis in the shipbuilding industry deepens, may we expect a debate before any irrevocable decisions are taken by the Government?

Will the Home Secretary be coming to the House to explain his efforts to try to persuade the Independent Broadcasting Authority to prohibit the showing of a television documentary about the shooting of three members of the IRA in Gibraltar? In the event of him failing to persuade the IBA, will he seek an injunction to prevent it from showing the film?

Has the Leader of the House received a request from the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) to make a personal statement to reply to the allegations made in the admittedly Murdoch-owned *Today* newspaper this morning that he has been seeking to interfere in the planning process to his own benefit?

Having been present, along with a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends, last Friday for the Adjournment debate about the conduct of the Prime Minister initiated by my hon. and tenacious Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and having heard the unsatisfactory reply from the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, who was put up to respond, may I ask the Leader of the House if he will arrange for the matter to be debated more fully, preferably in Government time?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has asked me five questions. First, he asked about the special units which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is setting up as a result of the statement he made to the House yesterday. My right hon. Friend made clear the way in which the units will be run. However, I recognise that there may still be some confusion and, if there is, I will refer the matter to my right hon. Friend to see whether any further clarification is required.

I note the hon. Gentleman's reference to the shipbuilding industry. That is an important industry on which it would be right to have a debate in the not-too-distant future. I hope that he will agree that the exact timing of the debate can be discussed through the usual channels.

With regard to the Independent Broadcasting Authority and Gibraltar, it is not my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary but my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary who has been in contact with Lord Thomson, the chairman of the IBA, to ask him to postpone the transmission of the programme as it is understood to include interviews with potential witnesses at the Gibraltar coroner's inquest which is to be heard later this year. My right hon. and learned Friend was naturally concerned that the coroner's inquest would be prejudiced which, I should have thought, would concern every hon. Member.

The Under-Secretary of State for Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), acted entirely within his rights as a private citizen, along with other local residents, in raising objection to the proposed development. The Department of the Environment has considered the matter and has decided not to stop the proposed development.

I have read the *Official Report* of the Adjournment debate on Friday. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, answered the debate extremely well, and I have nothing further to add.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): When my right hon. Friend considers the business of the House for the next week or fortnight, will he bear in mind the photograph in today's

Evening Standard of the home of a young stewardess in my constituency, the door of which has been daubed with the words "scab" and "kill"? Will he further note that the daubing of her home occurred within 24 hours of the Labour party national executive expressing solidarity with the acts of violence and intimidation? Will he ensure that any debate on that matter gives hon. Members the opportunity to protest about the freedom to work and the right to work?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is a smear.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) must ask for debates and not raise matters like that about his constituency.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The national executive of the Labour party, in the motion that it passed yesterday, expressed no solidarity whatever with any acts of violence. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) to withdraw that allegation. It is false and casts a slur on every Opposition Member.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for what Members say provided it is in order. However, as I have said on previous occasions, business questions are designed for hon. Members to ask the Leader of the House for debates, and not to raise controversial constituency issues.

Mr. Wakeham: I confirm that I also do not have any responsibility for Labour party policy. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) reflects the concern in his constituency. I cannot promise a debate next week on that matter.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that the reply to the question about his hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) is completely unsatisfactory? What has happened to ministerial standards? Why should a Minister be able to phone a Minister in another Department to ask for a planning application to be remitted? That is completely wrong. The Leader of the House should recommend to the Prime Minister that the hon. Member should go forthwith.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman heard exactly what I said. I said that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, together with other local residents, had acted properly and within his rights as a private citizen in objecting to the proposed development. The matter was dealt with by the Department of the Environment in entirely the proper fashion and it decided not to stop the proposed development. I should have thought that that was a satisfactory outcome for all except the residents who objected.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Reverting to the situation in Dover and other east Kent communities that are affected by the P and O industrial dispute, will my right hon. Friend take into account the possibility of persuading the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Employment to be ready to make a statement on this important matter next week? The situation is deteriorating, communities are deeply divided, and the right to work must be preserved by the Government, in accordance with the law if necessary.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my hon. Friend; it is a disturbing situation. I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Employment. I am sure that they will not hesitate to make a statement in the House if they believe that to be the right course of action.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State for Defence has been engaged in important discussions with the nuclear planning group in Brussels. Will he make a statement to the House next week on any decisions that were taken at that meeting?

Has the Chairman of the Committee of Selection yet reported to the Leader of the House on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee and the inability of any—or enough—Conservative Members to sit on it? If that process has reached a dead end, is it possible to have a Joint Committee of both Houses, which would at least allow some scrutiny of the Scottish Office?

Mr. Wakeham: The matter of the NATO meeting was raised with me through the usual channels and I have made inquiries about it. I shall check that the copy of the communiqué is available in the Library, as I believe it to be. The hon. Gentleman will know that it is not our normal practice to make statements after these meetings because of the confidential nature of the exchanges, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

As I think most people know, I have now received a letter from the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, in which he reports that the Committee was unable to nominate members to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs when it met last week. When approached on that occasion, none of my hon. Friends who represent Scottish constituencies expressed a willingness to serve on the Committee. However, discussions are still continuing.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that the Chinese Communist Government in Beijing is about to publish the Basic Law which will govern the future of Hong Kong after 1997. As there has been some suggestion that this House should not discuss that matter, can my right hon. Friend assure us that there will be a debate on Hong Kong before the summer recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend that there will be a debate on Hong Kong before the summer recess, but I shall certainly refer the matter to the Foreign Secretary and have discussions with him about what would be most appropriate.

I cut short my answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I was going to say, in answer to a question that he did not ask me, that if he had asked for a debate I should have suggested that that matter be dealt with through the usual channels.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that he has fallen below his usual standards of full and frank explanation? Is it not a fact that next Thursday he intends to debate the land set-aside, stabilisers and cessation of farming draft regulations of the

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

European Community aimed at reform of its agriculture policy, together with the agriculture price proposals for the whole of next year? Would it not have been better for the right hon. Gentleman to have made that plain?

Secondly, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that by putting such a debate on the Adjournment he prevents the House from taking a view, if it so wishes, on any of these matters? By widening the debate on the Adjournment, anything can be included in the subject, and that is a constitutional decision that could be of considerable importance to the House, now and in the future.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's wisdom in those matters. He will appreciate that there has been wide interest in the possibility of a general debate on agriculture matters. The proposals that I have announced are for the general convenience of the House. He will understand that those matters were the subject of discussion and agreement through the usual channels, but I am happy to have further discussions through the usual channels, if that is required.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my right hon. Friend find time for the House to discuss the industrial action in the Inner London education authority, where an office workers' strike has meant that the special school bus drivers have been unable to take children to school, with the result that special school children are unable to exercise their right to full-time education, unless their parents can afford the taxi fares to take them?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the anxiety of my hon. Friend and a number of his constituents over that matter, but I regret that I am unable to find time next week for a debate.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Ministry of Defence has just lost a long, hard battle against some of its own ex-service men? One and a quarter hours ago, the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords ruled that British nuclear test veterans could sue for damage caused in the Pacific island tests. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that that will result in a flood of thousands of legal claims and years of litigation unless the Government set up a full and generous compensation scheme? May we have a debate on that matter next week?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no idea whether the interpretation that the right hon. Gentleman puts on any decision that may have been made an hour and a quarter ago is correct, but I am sure that he will agree that it would not be for me to comment on something of that sort, which I have not even seen. However, I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. Friend say how he allocates time for debates on the regions of the United Kingdom or, as I should perhaps say, the various countries that make up the United Kingdom? Does he have the precise number of hours or days of debate for each part, or is it simply a matter of the business that has to be done?

Mr. Wakeham: The process that the Leader of the House goes through is to seek to put a quart into a pint pot. One does one's best to meet the general wishes of the House. There was a time when the Opposition regularly initiated debates on the regions of the United Kingdom, but as prosperity now spreads steadily throughout the country as a result of the Government's policies, Opposition Members appear less enthusiastic about having such debates.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): It cannot have escaped the notice of the Leader of the House that today sees the opening of the garden festival in Glasgow, which is a significant event not just for the city but for the whole of Scotland. Would not this be an appropriate time to announce the possibility of a debate on tourism, which is very important to the economy of Scotland, enabling hon. Members to explore such issues as the transport infrastructure and the rating system?

On the issue of the Scottish Select Committee, will the right hon. Gentleman advise the House whether he will afford an opportunity directly to the Scottish National party and to the Social and Liberal Democrats to offer their view on how matters may proceed?

Mr. Wakeham: On the last point, the hon. Lady has not been shy in giving her advice to the House and to me on a number of occasions and I have a shrewd idea that I know, broadly speaking, how she would like to proceed on that matter. However, the matter of nomination to the Select Committee is not for me. It is a matter for the Committee of Selection. I shall draw the hon. Lady's views to its attention.

I am sure that the hon. Lady is right to say what she did about the garden festival in Glasgow and to stress the importance of tourism, which could well be the subject of a useful debate, although I cannot promise her a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will know that last Sunday, together with many colleagues, I enjoyed watching the cup final at Wembley. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). He owns a football club, but, if he had owned a racehorse, I would have been unable to see it race on a Sunday because of the inadequate laws of the land. When will we have a debate, supported by the Government, enabling horse racing to enjoy the same facilities as every other sport in the land?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall never be free of the scars left by Sunday shopping Bills and allied matters. The Government would like to make progress on such matters, but it would not be sensible to start on that process until we were pretty sure that we had a bigger measure of agreement than exists.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement on the employment of Mr. Peter Luff as a special adviser to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? He is classified as a full civil servant but is paid nothing by the Department, receiving his money direct from his employers, Good Relations. A statement is important since that lobbyist is employed at the heart of the Department of Trade and Industry by Good Relations, a company subject to an investigation by the self-same Department because of fraudulent activity during a takeover.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the arrangements made in respect of that special adviser have been made after

proper consultation and inquiries, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be aware that the reports of Sir Roy Griffiths and Lady Wagner have aroused enormous and extremely well-informed discussion in many circles. It is essential that, before the Government make a definitive reply to those reports, they have the opportunity to hear from the House the wide range of opinions and ideas that they have generated. Is there any chance of an early debate on them?

Mr. Wakeham: The reports are being considered by the Government and it would not be helpful for me to comment until appropriate consideration has taken place. However, I note my hon. Friend's suggestion, and I shall bear it in mind when we consider how best to proceed.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Leader of the House consider giving time next week for a debate on grandparents' rights in support of my early-day motion which has been signed by 261 hon. Members from both sides of the House? Why did the Government Whip object to the Second Reading of my Grandparents (Adoption of Children) Bill last Friday? Will he also look at the allegations made in the press this week about the drinking habits of Members of Parliament, and perhaps consider closing the press bars?

Mr. Wakeham: It is not for me to comment on the second matter raised by the hon. Gentleman. On the first matter, the procedure for private Members' Bills is probably better understood by the hon. Gentleman than his rather naive approach to the question would lead us to believe. It would not be right for us to make a statement on that this week.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 1022?

[That this House notes that according to the BBC Annual Report 1986-87 the decision was taken not to proceed until after the General Election with production of Mr. Ian Curtis's 'The Falklands Play', and that in May the BBC is due to screen Mr. Charles Wood's play 'Tumbledown', a play of emotional pacification which emphasises the ghastly horrors of the fighting without once saying why the war had to be fought; and, in view of the BBC's obligation to be even handed over matters of controversy, calls on the BBC to proceed with production of 'The Falklands Play' at once.]

Does he agree that, now that the BBC has decided to screen the play "Tumbledown" at the end of next month, it would be right and in the interests of balance to proceed with the production of "The Falklands Play"? Is he aware that yesterday the House of Lords had a useful and constructive debate on the responsibilities and duties of the BBC? Will my right hon. Friend either arrange for me to win the forthcoming ballot or arrange a debate in Government time on that matter?

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman wants to interfere with the BBC and the ballot.

Mr. Wakeham: I was going to give my hon. Friend a helpful answer, but the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) wisely suggested that I had better not talk about ballots. I wish my hon. Friend the best luck in the world in the ballot, but it is not for me to interfere with that. Nor, indeed, is it for me to interfere with the BBC about the programmes that it shows. Such matters are best left to the BBC.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1024 about the Nestlé bid for a good British company—Rowntree?

[That this House notes that under Swiss law it would be impossible for British chocolate and confectionery companies to take over Swiss-based companies; also notes the recent commendation by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the successful manufacturing and sales operation of Rowntree plc in tackling the European market; and believes that the 12,000 jobs in the company are threatened by the takeover bid by Nestlé; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to refer the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.]

May we have an early debate on that matter because the largest private employer in my constituency is a Rowntree factory and there is deep concern that it will not be in the British interest for a foreigner to take over that company?

Mr. Wakeham: There is a well established procedure for these matters. It falls to the Director General of Fair Trading to consider the proposal under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and to advise my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the normal way on the question of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I am sure that it is in the best interests to proceed in the proper way.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When my right hon. Friend considers whether to have a debate on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, will he bear in mind the fact that in Scotland I have been accused of being less than honourable in this matter and that as a result I am now required and forced to take action through the Scottish and United Kingdom courts to rectify it? That could well have an effect on any debate that might take place because it would debar me effectively from stating my case properly and fully here.

Mr. Wakeham: I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In reply to a question this afternoon, the Prime Minister referred to the communiqué from the nuclear planning group which she said would be about guidance on the modernisation of nuclear weapons. Nothwithstanding the reply that has already been given about a statement which might be made when the Secretary of State for Defence returns, does the Leader of the House agree that the communiqué is only about guidance because there is no agreement in NATO about the so-called modernisation plan? Does he therefore agree that it is appropriate that the House should not just hear a statement, but should have a debate to discuss whether the so-called modernisation might be necessary? Will he make early arrangements for such a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Lady's long-standing interest in these matters. However, my responsibility is to check that a copy of the communiqué is available in the Library so that hon. Members may look at it. It is not normal practice to make statements after these meetings because of the confidential nature of the exchanges. It would not be right to depart from that practice on this occasion.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House consider the fact that the Secretary of State for Scotland is likely to be in Glasgow today and that, although we accept that he may come back with a bunch of flowers, he is much more likely to come back with a bunch of fives because the poll tax figure for Glasgow is £529? As this legislation will be implemented in Scotland in 1989, we need clear and accurate figures. We are much more likely to accept the figure of £529 given by a local government official than the £200-odd figure given by officials at the Scottish Office, whom we are beginning to distrust.

Mr. Wakeham: Despite the alarms and excursions caused by the hon. Gentleman and other opponents of the new system in Scotland, it is proceeding steadily towards implementation on the planned timetable. As we have always intended, Scotland will enjoy the benefits of this important reform from 1 April 1989.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate about county structure plans? The Gloucestershire county structure plan is causing a great deal of concern to my constituents and perhaps other county structure plans are causing similar problems elsewhere. Such plans are often based on the most flimsy statistical evidence. I hope that my right hon. Friend will find time for a debate on that issue.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that there are many anxieties on that issue, and I am certain that we would have an interesting debate if I could find time for one. However, I cannot be too hopeful. Perhaps my hon. Friend will try his luck by raising this subject in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Would the right hon. Gentleman raise within Cabinet the need to renationalise British Telecom in view of its increasing incompetence? Is he aware that since last November there has been a persistent fault in the telephone in my flat nearly every single time that I have tried to ring it on 219 numbers and on no other numbers? Does he realise that a number of engineers have assured me the fault is not in the Grosvenor exchange and that the fault is not in the equipment here in the House? Will he accept from me that there is not much compensation in the fact that an engineer rang me at 11.40 this morning to ask if I could explain to him what the problem was?

Since British Telecom seems absolutely flummoxed by this fault, would the right hon. Gentleman—I am being serious—consider sending in engineers into the special intercepting equipment that was provided in Whitehall a few years ago which allowed the interception of hon. Members' calls as well as a whole range of other calls throughout Whitehall? Is it not likely that that is where the fault is, and that these poor ordinary engineers do not know that the equipment exists?

Mr. Wakeham: I suspect that the remedy that the hon. Gentleman proposes would be considerably worse than the disease that he has at the moment. I congratulate him on using the Floor of the House of Commons to give out his cry for help. I have no doubt that somebody more qualified than I will come to his assistance.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House take time to read through the report of Northern Ireland Question Time today and perhaps consider giving us a longer time if hon. Members persist in asking questions that appear to be more directed towards the Foreign Secretary and the Attorney-General? In the light of the comments already made about the proposed broadcast this evening, will he consider giving time for a debate in the House soon on the role of the media in representing or reporting terrorism?

Mr. Wakeham: How long to allocate for Question Time is an issue that is considered from time to time through the usual channels, and what the hon. Gentleman says is obviously one of the factors to be taken into consideration. I recognise also the importance of the other subject on which he wants a debate. While I agree that it is important, I do not believe that we can find time for a debate on it in the immediate future.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as a result of a rather curious court decision last week, the bones of Edward, martyr and King of England, may reside not in Shaftesbury abbey, in my constituency, where they have rested for hundreds of years, but in Woking, in Surrey? Will he find time in the parliamentary week to allow me to put the case that these bones, belonging to a one-time King of England, should reside in Shaftesbury, where they belong?

Mr. Wakeham: I should be interested to hear further on this subject from my hon. Friend and I would have thought that an Adjournment debate was designed for raising subjects of this importance.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Leader of the House seen the early-day motion on the P and O dispute headed by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) and others and signed by 136 Labour Members of Parliament calling for a debate on this critical issue? Is he aware that Jeffrey Sterling, the P and O boss, was employed by the Government when the trade union legislation was going through the House? Is he also aware that the company has contributed about £100,000 to Tory party funds? If anybody's funds should be sequestrated, it should be those of P and O for its role in the Zeebrugge disaster, and not those of the National Union of Seamen.

Mr. Wakeham: I reject entirely the disgraceful remarks that the hon. Gentleman made, using the privilege of the House to abuse somebody outside the House who cannot defend himself. The established service scheme is a voluntary arrangement and the decision of an individual shipping company to withdraw from the scheme is a matter for the company and the Merchant Navy establishment administration, and does not involve the Government. The Department of Transport safety regulations apply irrespective of how crews have been recruited. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has asked his surveyors to ensure that normal practices are followed in checking crew certification and witnessing safety drills for P and O's cross-Channel ferries.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Last week, I asked the Leader of the House a question about the need for an urgent debate on matters affecting London. Will he consider once again the need for a special debate on London which can encompass the many problems faced by health authorities as a result of staff shortages—because of low pay, lack of accommodation and amalgamation of health authorities—the increasing planning and traffic

problems of London—caused by the lack of support for public transport—and increasing underfunding of many voluntary and social agencies which are trying to deal with the housing crisis that thousands of Londoners face? Since the abolition of the GLC and any form of democratic government across London, these problems have got worse, and it is in this House that this matter must be raised and debated. Can the right hon. Gentleman give us an early date for a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I reject most of what the hon. Gentleman says. Nevertheless, I thought that I had given him a reasonably encouraging reply last week when I said that I recognised that it would be appropriate to have a debate on London, and that I would find an opportunity, I hoped in the not-too-distant future, for a debate. I cannot be any more forthcoming this week than I was last week.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As the Prime Minister has claimed sole responsibility for modifying the social security regulations, and virtually denied any responsibility for the mishap that occurred, will there be an opportunity for other Ministers to reply to that in the House of Commons? Is not the Leader of the House somewhat worried that the contempt that the Prime Minister has shown towards the Secretary of State for Social Services, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary, all within two weeks, will be shown towards him in due course?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is trying to be helpful, but it would be better if he listened to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, which was that the Government had come to a decision, and we were congratulated by the Leader of the Opposition on that decision.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have a debate on the removal by the Government of the discretion previously given to local authorities to provide free milk for all children in special schools? Is the Leader of the House aware that in Greenacres school, in my constituency, the majority of the children no longer receive free milk and the devoted staff in that school, which I visited this morning, and in all other special schools throughout the country, are appalled at this squalid, mean and nasty act?

Mr. Wakeham: The House continually discusses the priorities of how public money should be spent, but I cannot promise the hon. and learned Gentleman a debate in the next week or so.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I refer the Leader of the House to the issue raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley)—the announcement of the judgment in the other place relating to the nuclear test veterans. I found his answer disappointing, if I heard it correctly. My right hon. Friend referred to the need for a judicial review and to establish a major compensation fund, and the need to debate those issues. Can the Leader of the House work out how long it is since a debate was held in Government time? Will he accept that since the war, Governments, of whatever political persuasion, have treated these young men and women shabbily? They gave the prime of their life to the service of their country, and their terrible inheritance is visited not only upon them but upon their sons and daughters and their grandsons and granddaughters. We need to discuss this subject. Therefore, will the Leader of the House reconsider his answer to my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Wakeham: I did not say that we should not debate these important issues. We should read the judgment, think about it and decide what we should say before opening our mouths. That is a reasonable proposition, and one that I have enunciated from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Given what the Leader of the House said about leaving it to the programme makers to decide what is shown and what is not shown, will he find time next week for a debate on the gross political interference by the Foreign Secretary, who attempted to browbeat the IBA and prevent the showing tonight of the "This Week" programme on the killings in Gibraltar? Does he understand that on both sides of the House there is increasing distaste with the regular attempts by the Government to interfere with the editorial independence and integrity of the broadcasters?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman speaks on home affairs for his party. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary pointed out to the chairman of the IBA the dangers of allowing to be shown a programme that interviews potential witnesses at the Gibraltar coroner's inquest, which is to be held under the proper law later this year. That the hon. Gentleman expresses no concern about the interference that could happen to a proper carriage of justice in these matters I find very disappointing.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Has the Leader of the House had a chance to read the publication entitled "Westminster's dirty dozen, the real face of Conservatives in local government"? It is about the activities of Lady Porter, the leader of Westminster council, and the policies pursued under her administration. I am sure that the Leader of the House knows Lady Porter, who is a sub-Thatcherite without the Prime Minister's low cunning.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Phrases of that kind do not add to our debates.

Mr. Banks: The Government are always ready to interfere in the affairs of town halls and to inspire debates about local government. In view of that, may we have an early debate on the real scandal of Conservative local government in Westminster, perhaps in the context of a London-wide debate, if not about Westminster specifically? We should like to be able to address our attention to the scandal of the sale of three graveyards in Westminster for 15p which Lady Porter is now trying to buy back for millions at the cost of Westminster's ratepayers. If that was a Labour-controlled council, there would be an unstoppable demand by Conservative Members for an early debate to surcharge its councillors. Let us have a bit of justice in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: It would not be right to debate this matter in the House at this time. It is not entirely a matter for me. If the hon. Gentleman would like to have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench, perhaps he could persuade them to use an Opposition day for such a debate. The matters about

[Mr. Wakeham]

which the hon. Gentleman has spoken are serious and will be properly dealt with in accordance with the rules and laws of this country.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Early in business questions the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) specifically stated that the national executive of the Labour party had passed a motion that supported the use of violence in the P and O industrial dispute in Dover. Thirteen members of the national executive committee of the Labour party are Members of this House. The motion about which the hon. Member for Dover spoke was moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and seconded by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It must surely be out of order for any hon. Member falsely to accuse 13 hon. Members of advocating the use of violence in industrial disputes when they have patently not done so. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will rule that the hon. Member for Dover must apologise.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is only a few days since you said that you wanted better standards in the House. The most baseless accusation had been made by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), and surely it is right and proper that he should be forced to apologise. If he is allowed to get away with what he said—which was totally untrue—then surely the wish that you expressed for better standards will go unheeded. The hon. Member for Dover, who does not seem to be here—[HON. MEMBERS:"He is."]—should have the guts immediately to apologise.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Chair cannot be held responsible for what hon. Members say in the House, provided that what they say is in order. I have no knowledge as to the truth or untruth of any of the comments that are made. The comment by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) was not particularly helpful, but there are other parliamentary ways to deal with the matter.

Mr. Dobson: It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the logic of your ruling is that if I were to say at the Dispatch Box at this minute that I thought that members of the Government were lining their pockets that would be out of order, but that if I were to say that they were using their offices in order to benefit their own ends I would remain in order. I should be grateful if you would give further consideration to this matter.

Mr. Speaker: We have rules in the House that the Chair will always enforce. We also have conventions, one of which is that we do not refer to each other in uncomplimentary terms. I accept that what the hon. Member for Dover said was highly controversial, but it is not within my power to force him to withdraw. Allegations are frequently made in the House—some were made during business questions—but I cannot adjudicate on whether they are right or wrong.

Mr. Brian Gould (Dagenham): As one of those traduced by the allegations made by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), may I say that I and my hon. Friends find ourselves in a particular difficulty. We are precluded by well understood rules enforced by you, Mr. Speaker, from accusing the hon. Gentleman of uttering that falsehood. We cannot accuse him of perpetrating a lie. That means that we are precluded from resisting and refusing to accept that false allegation. Therefore, we have no alternative but to ask you to protect us.

It seems that where a clearly false statement has been made it would be at least as unacceptable to the House, and surely to you, Mr. Speaker, if we were to respond by describing that false statement as a lie. Is it possible for you to ensure that that false statement is withdrawn and its falsity acknowledged?

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be held responsible for deciding whether what is said in the Chamber is true or false. I have no knowledge of any resolutions passed today. Every hon. Member must take responsibility for what he says. There are other parliamentary ways for this matter to be dealt with if that is considered necessary. *[Interruption.]* Order. I do not think that it can be dealt with through the Chair.

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Sir. It is in the knowledge of the House—*[Interruption.]*—if I can get a word in. It is in the knowledge of the House that a few moments ago you reprimanded my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for a mild quip about the Prime Minister, but the honourable—in quotes—Gentleman on the other side reflected on the honour of some of my colleagues. That is an entirely different matter, Sir, and we have to ask you please to protect Members on this side when they are accused of dishonourable activities, as was the case a few moments ago.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter for me, but if the hon. Member for Dover felt able to clarify the matter it might help the whole House.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do not these points of order from the Opposition portray a little sensitivity on this matter of violence in picketing? Would not the way out be for you to consult the Leader of the House so that we might have a debate next week in which the Opposition can clear up this ambiguity about violence on the picket lines?

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I should like to raise a separate matter with you, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Member for Dover is a liar.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called Mr. Madden.

Mr. Madden: I should like to raise a point of order on a separate matter concerning the Economic League. I regret having to raise this matter further with you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has written to me further on this matter as a matter of privilege. He knows that, following the decision of the House on 6 February 1978, these matters may not be raised with me in the House. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await my further reply to his letter.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have listened to what the Opposition Front-Bench

spokesmen have said about these accusations, and I am inclined to think that the hon. Member who made them is definitely a liar.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows he cannot make such allegations in the Chamber against another hon. Member. We are all honourable Members here. I accept that what the hon. Member for Dover said was not particularly helpful. I drew attention to it at the time. I cannot be held responsible for what he has said; that is a matter for him.

Mr. Powell: If I cannot say that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is a liar, are you suggesting that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen who were the subject of those accusations are liars? They have defended their actions and stated quite clearly and categorically that what the hon. Member for Dover said was definitely untrue. I should like to have your interpretation, Mr. Speaker, of who is telling the truth and who is not telling the truth and who should withdraw his statement and who should not.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that it would be helpful if the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) were to get us out of this difficulty so that we might move on.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware of the question that I put to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House during business questions. The reason I put my question in that manner was that, quite properly, having listened to your ruling, I adjudged that the hon. Member who had accused me of cheating did so in a form and in a manner for which I could take him to court, and I am doing so. He did that outside the House.

I have taken the necessary precautions. I believe that this is the correct way to proceed. One must look at the correct procedures for dealing with these matters, and not use up the time of the House, as has been happening, on matters that can be dealt with in other ways.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not make any judgments about what my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said or about the views of those on the national executive of the Labour party, but is it in order for the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), from a sedentary position, to shout, "Liar"? Surely it would be appropriate —we all heard him—for him to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: All kinds of allegations of untruths are alleged in this Chamber even this afternoon. I did not hear the comment. I have already dealt with the question of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who raised the use of the word. The House should reflect carefully on allegations made across the Chamber. The comment of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) was not helpful, but it was made in a general sense and was not an allegation against individual hon. Members. I have no authority to force him to withdraw it. It would have been helpful for the whole House if he had felt able to do so.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Opposition Members do not challenge your ruling, but many of us find it a revelation that we would rather not have found. Thirteen of my right hon. and hon. Friends are accused of supporting violence. It is a totally false allegation, and that fact is provable by the text of the resolution to which the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) referred. It was not a generalised accusation. It was a specific allegation about the national executive of the Labour party.

If the rules of the House do not allow you to get an apology out of the hon. Member for Dover, the customs of the House require the Tory Whips, who are so famous for their discipline, to get an apology out of him. Having voted last week to take disciplinary action against a Labour party Member in support of the rules, customs and practices of the House, Opposition Members will feel bitterly let down if the Conservative party does not apply the same standards to its own Members.

Mr. Speaker: Let me finally deal with this matter. Again I say, in view of the exchanges, it would have been helpful if the hon. Member for Dover had felt able to say something. I entirely accept what the Shadow Leader of the House said about the integrity of his colleagues. I hope that we can now move on.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that we do not use the word "liar", because we work on the basis that we are honourable Members, however much we may disagree with each other. Even if he did not know it at the time, the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) must now know that his statement was a lie. In the circumstances——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only the hon. Member for Dover can say whether what he meant——

Mr. David Shaw *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Shaw.

Mr. Shaw: There are some points on which I may be able to help the House. There is a question mark over the point that I made earlier, insofar as I referred, I think, to the Labour party and its general support following the motion that was passed.

In view of the fact that at least two hon. Members are on the picket line at the moment and, as I understand it, are encouraging the very acts to which I referred earlier, I would not feel that I could wholly withdraw. I believe it to be a true statement in defence of my constituents and their interests. Nevertheless, if the national executive of the Labour party withdraws the motion that it passed yesterday, I might be in a position to reconsider next week.

Mr. Gould: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have just heard a disgraceful attempt to inflame a quite unnecessarily difficult situation brought about by the false statement that was made by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw). His statement levelled an accusation in terms at the national executive of the Labour party, of which I am a member, and accused us of passing a resolution that supported the use of violence.

I know the terms of that resolution. Its terms are available to any hon. Member who cares to read them. Within 10 seconds the resolution can be handed to any hon. Member who cares to check it. It has been widely circulated and published in the press. I invite the hon. Gentleman to take this copy and to find within its terms any phrase or word that will support a scintilla of what he has said. His was a deliberate and false allegation, which he has not only failed to withdraw but compounded with further insult.

[Mr. Gould]

I cannot believe, Mr. Speaker, that you can tolerate that type of behaviour, and I call upon you to protect the rights of the House to proper and decent standards.

Mr. Speaker: I am deeply disappointed that the hon. Member for Dover did not feel able to clarify what he said. He must take responsibility for it.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) has made the whole matter worse. He said that two hon. Members are in Dover encouraging illegal actions. He made that claim without any evidence whatsoever. If we are to maintain this business of our being honourable Members, it is an outrage for the hon. Gentleman to say that two hon. Members are outside the House condoning illegal action. That is an example of double standards, and the hon. Gentleman should be made to withdraw his dishonest, discreditable and calumnious statement.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must end the matter there.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a disappointing result to the points of order. I am not responsible for anything that goes on outside the House. I am not responsible for anything that the hon. Member for Dover says—I wish that I were.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) has made two statements that he knows to be untrue. They have been fully refuted by the Opposition Members against whom he made the allegation. You have quite clearly asked him to withdraw the statement, and he has quite clearly refused to do so. The House is now entitled to know what action you intend to take in respect of the hon. Member's behaviour this afternoon to ensure that there is some consistency in the treatment of hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: I did not ask him to withdraw it. I called him, because I hoped that he would make a helpful explanation to the House to enable us to move on. We should now move on.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 16 MAY

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. Sydney Chapman
Sir Fergus Montgomery
Mr. Stanley Orme

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) made an allegation about my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), because they are the two Members who are on the picket line in Dover, as indeed will be a large number of Opposition Members as long as the dispute lasts. That is a perfectly legitimate action for them to be taking. The hon. Member for Dover has linked those two Members with the story that appeared on the front page of the *Evening Standard*. That is what he said, and that is a disgraceful and unacceptable thing for any Member to say about two other hon. Members. Everyone in the House knows that, whatever may be said about my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield and my hon. Friend the Member for Walton, they would not in any way be associated with the sort of disgraceful action that was reported in the *Evening Standard*. For all we know that door in Dover might have been daubed by an *Evening Standard* reporter in order to get a story, because that is the way such people normally go about inciting the sort of troubles that the Member for Dover comes here to talk about.

We cannot allow our right hon. and hon. Friends to be so scurrilously attacked by the hon. Member for Dover and must ask you yet again, Mr. Speaker, to insist that the hon. Member for Dover withdraws his remarks and apologises to the House. If he does not, Mr. Speaker, you must name him, because what he has done is as grave a discourtesy and an insult as anything that has happened here in recent weeks.

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Well, I will hear it, and then we will get on.

Mr. Faulds: I am most grateful to you, Sir. You will know that most of us in the House—indeed, I would say the whole Chamber, with one or two exceptions—have great admiration for your Speakership and always respond when you make a request that we should withdraw a comment or correct some improper word. Nearly every hon. Member does that. In this unfortunate case, you have made an appeal to the so-called honourable Member and he has not had the guts, the courage or the honesty to respond to it. Unfortunately, I cannot call him an honourable liar, but—we are surrounded by honourable Members this afternoon—I can call him an honourable shit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member cannot do that; it offends in every possible way. Kindly withdraw, if not the "honourable", the last word, which I will not repeat.

Mr. Faulds: With my rich vocabulary I could think of two or three worse words, Mr. Speaker, but to oblige you I will withdraw the word "shit". There are lots of other words that would suitably apply to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Why is it so difficult to find a truth in this House when it appears so easy to hide an untruth?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I sought to give the hon. Member an opportunity to correct this matter in order that we could move on. I am sorry that what he said really compounded the problem rather than offered a solution to it.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, ETC.

Ordered,

That the draft Housing Defects (Reinstatement Grant) (Amendment of Conditions for Assistance) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Orders of the Day

Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill
[Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

4.35 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill, which comes here from another place, is, as every hon. Member can see, lengthy and complex. It has 285 clauses and eight schedules. Its subject matter—copyright, designs and patents—is highly technical. It will probably be a great disappointment to some hon. Members to know that, as far as I am aware, it is devoid of any party political controversy. It is, nevertheless, a Bill of great significance to many people. Its effects will be felt to a greater or lesser degree by almost every sector of the economy. It will affect the music industry—composers, musicians, music publishers, record companies—which generates more than £1,000 million each year. It will affect those engaged in the publication of books and newspapers. It will affect the design effort in British industry. It will provide a legal framework for broadcasting and cable transmission. It will also affect the computer software industry, the film industry, the pharmaceutical industry and many more industries.

The effects of the Bill are not confined solely to business and industry. It has implications for education, the library service, the theatre and even the Great Ormond street hospital. It takes within its compass the artist painting at his easel and the designer of a semiconductor chip, the local operatic society in the village hall and the signals beamed from a television satellite.

I am sure that we are all agreed on the need to promote and protect creative talent. The House has to begin by accepting that a man's idea is as much his personal property as his more tangible assets, such as his house and his car. In some respects, indeed, a man's ideas are an even more important part of his personal property. That concept underlies all intellectual property law, whether it is copyright protection for artists and authors or patent protection for inventors. By establishing a property right in the idea, the law gives protection against those who would steal another man's ideas.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): As the right hon. and learned Gentleman well knows, one of my major interests is photography and the interests of photographers. The Bill has a quite severe effect on photographers in certain areas and I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman—not necessarily in his speech, but later—will look into that. The Lords did change some parts of the copyright to enable a photograph to enjoy the same rights as literary works, but I should particularly like the right hon. and learned Gentleman to look at clause 30, the new wording of which would destroy the livelihood of many photographers, clauses 73 to 85 on moral rights and clause 156 on territorial waters. All those clauses greatly affect photographers. All I ask of the right hon. and learned Gentleman at the moment is that when the Government put amendments in the Bill they will try to give as full protection to photographers as to any other artists or thinkers.

Mr. Clarke: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. He is right in saying that I could have added photographers of all kinds to the list of people that I just described as being affected by the Bill. We have to get the balance correct between the rights of the photographer, those who employ the photographer, those who commission photographs, those who publish them, and so on. Some extremely difficult issues are raised. The hon. Gentleman will know, as he has probably followed the debates in another place, that it is difficult to get the balance right between the conflicting interests. Important issues for photograhers will be raised in Committee when we get to those sections of the Bill that deal with ownership of copyright or the so-called moral rights of the photographer, which I will come back to in a moment when I deal with the moral rights of authors and others covered by the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman's intervention underlined, we are talking in every part of the Bill about a person's basic property rights in his own ideas and his own artistic work.

Our system of legal protection for ideas has served us well, ensuring dissemination of ideas with a proper degree of protection for the innovator. But it has become apparent recently, particularly in copyright and design protection, that the law needs looking at again, especially in the light of technical developments that have taken place in various fields and were not always anticipated when the law was drawn up.

The Bill is the result of a very long period of consideration and consultation with all the interest groups affected, dating back to the Whitford report of 1977. Since then we have had three Green Papers and the 1986 White Paper, entitled "Intellectual Property and Innovation". The Government have changed certain ideas about policy even since the White Paper. Before coming to this House, the Bill was extensively considered in another place and a number of amendments were made there after further consideration of its details.

The Bill sets out to restructure the law on a more logical and consistent basis than the existing legislation and in a way which takes account of the advances made in the past 30 years. Where possible we have tried to anticipate future developments. The House will not wish to come back to this subject for some time, having passed such comprehensive legislation. Our overriding objective—hon. Members who have the pleasure of serving on the Committee will sometimes find this difficult to achieve—has been to ensure a fair balance between the need to encourage creativity by providing strong protection, and the justifiable desire of society and consumers to have access to and the use of the products of creativity. We are seeking to ensure a balance between protection and fair competition. We are seeking a system with bureaucracy reduced to a minimum. The Bill seeks to provide the means for those with ideas to get a fair reward for their work, without placing unfair burdens on the public at large.

The Bill is in seven parts, and I can be of most help to the House by briefly describing their main contents.

Part I is by far the biggest, making up more than half of the Bill. It sets out the law of copyright in a more ordered and logical way than the existing statute, the Copyright Act 1956, which is to be repealed. Part I is subdivided into no fewer than 10 chapters. Chapters 2 and

[Mr. Clarke]

3 cover clauses 16 to 72. Chapter 2 sets out the rights which the copyright owner is to enjoy, of which the most fundamental is contained in clause 17: the right to prevent copying. The rights are extensive and we recognise that they must be tempered. There is a balance to be struck between the rights we are asking Parliament to grant to creators to encourage creativity and the effect that the full exercise of those rights may have on others. While it is right that copyright owners should be able to exploit their works to the full, it would not be right to confer rights which could be used oppressively. So chapter 2 protects the copyright owner.

Chapter 3 sets out a series of exceptions from copyright. These will ensure that copyright considerations do not unduly obstruct research, education, the library service or public administration. All these are areas where we think that the House will judge that the public interest is that the work may be used within clearly defined limits, without recourse to the copyright owner.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned that a reason for the Bill was to bring up to date the law as it affects some of the newer industries, and that is absolutely right. Is he aware that clause 63 seems to have a loophole which would allow for software theft, which has been estimated at about £50 million a year, by allowing firms to rent out software after a year? Will he agree to consider that in Committee? Many people feel strongly that if it is not put right it will restrict and damage investment in both computers and computer software industries. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend, of all people, would not want that to happen and that that is not his intention. If he would undertake to consider that, it would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend raises a serious and difficult issue. The Government are not altogether satisfied that we have the balance right. This part covers the so-called rental rights whereby after a given period someone can be free to hire out a product without recourse to the copyright owner of that product. We are all used to that in our daily lives with videos. Perfectly legitimate businesses have sprung up which rent videos which are somebody else's copyright, without anybody thinking that that gives rise to hardship to the copyright owner or that there is anything illegitimate about it. Businesses may spring up to rent compact discs which are almost indestructible. People will borrow them, make a perfect copy and return them without paying the full cost to the manufacturer or the composer. My hon. Friend raises the equivalent case for computer software designers. If after a year software can be hired out, once again a copy can be made without paying the full price to its author. It is extremely difficult to get the balance right. We do not want creators to exploit their copyright to an onerous extent on consumers who may want access to it, but strong reservations are held about the Bill as it stands.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take the Bill through Committee and he has been in charge of the main policy issues. He will certainly continue to consider the matter and it is his duty to get the balance right in the end. He tells me that he is meeting the British Computer Society next week to discuss the implications for those who design computer software and he will consider my hon. Friend's point. As the Bill passes through the House we shall have to consider it carefully to ensure that the results are correct.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that the difficulties that he has identified in clause 63 may result from the fact that the period of protection given by record rental is only one to two years? As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) suggested, perhaps we should consider a longer period, for example seven to 10 years.

Mr. Clarke: A period of one year is specified in the Bill and we could have an interesting debate on the proposition to extend that. I am sure that that will give rise in Committee to debates about how long music remains exploitable from the date that a record is made. Different considerations may arise for computer software and videos, and it would be nice to draft a clause that served the public interest properly for all times of copyright subject to rental right.

Consideration of the protection period is only one possible approach. Ministers have already canvassed a variety of propositions in our discussions and we look forward to having further propositions canvassed in Committee.

Chapter 4 introduces another new concept to our copyright law—the so-called moral rights of authors. The authors of certain classes of copyright works and the directors of copyright films are to have the right to be identified as the author or director and the right to object to distortions and mutilations of their works. Obviously, it may be damaging to the reputation of an author, photographer or any artist if his work is used in a deliberately distorted or mutilated form. His reputation is damaged by the use of something that began as his work. There are two versions of these so-called moral rights. They are usually known in jargon as the paternity right and the integrity right, and they will help authors and directors to establish and defend their artistic reputations. The introduction of moral rights, together with other technical amendments in the Bill, will also allow us to ratify the latest text of the Berne copyright convention. That is the most important of the international copyright conventions and it is our declared intention to ratify the Paris text once the Bill is on the statute book.

Chapters 9 and 10 cover clauses 148 to 169 and contain technical provisions and various definitions. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) is about to rise. Having seen what he said in business questions last Thursday, I can anticipate the point that he is about to raise.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I commend my right hon. and learned Friend's foresight. The clause does something which the House of Commons should not possibly allow: it deprives the House of its right of control over its property. Therefore, it breaches that fundamental principle of our constitution which provides that the House of Commons is independent of the Crown and should not in any way allow the Crown to control its proceedings.

It would make a mockery of our traditional claim of right by Mr. Speaker at every opening of Parliament, for the independence of the House of Commons with regard

to its own domestic affairs. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will say that at the Committee stage this part of the Bill will be amended so as to leave intact the integrity of the House of Commons.

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington has not yet moved on to another point. He is still dealing with the one that he helpfully raised in business questions last Thursday. We have become aware, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this, that the effects of clause 157 on the House and on another place could well be undesirable. Discussions have been taking place between officials of my Department and of the House, and I can say to my hon. Friend that we shall soon be in a position to table amendments, which I am sure will meet his legitimate concern. I can say yes to my hon. Friend's final question.

I expect that other representations on the Bill will not be so easily met. It is a feature of the Bill that on most issues that it raises there are two conflicting arguments coming from two conflicting interest groups, and hon. Members will tend to divide their support. With regard to the interests of the House, I am glad to say that we are all on the same side and we can meet the concern of my hon. Friend.

Part II is concerned with performers, who are a distinct category of creative talent. Under the existing law performers have no copyright or statutory civil right in their performances. The Performers' Protection Acts from 1958 to 1972 treat the making of unauthorised films, sound recordings, broadcast or cable transmission of performances as a criminal matter only.

It is far from satisfactory that the only protection for a performer is to contemplate a criminal prosecution of someone making unauthorised use of his performance. It was criticised by the Court of Appeal in a recent case concerning film performances by the late Peter Sellers. Although Peter Sellers' widow was successful in that case, the Court of Appeal pointed out that the present state of the law was far from satisfactory.

Part II retains the existing criminal provisions but supplements them with a clear statutory framework of civil law for the protection of performers. New rights are also provided for those with whom the performer has an exclusive recording contract, since they are also adversely affected by unauthorised or "bootleg" recordings. All this will put the law on a more sensible and enforceable basis for performers who are adversely affected.

Parts III and IV deal with designs. The protection of designs has been a very difficult and contentious issue for many years. We believe that we are now near to striking the right balance in the Bill. We start from the basic premise that all original designs deserve limited protection. It is not only wrong if a new product can be copied in its entirety as soon as it comes on the market, but it discourages the design effort needed to make a new product if a competitor can in any case copy it straightaway. We are, therefore, providing a new right for original designs, which will give protection against copying for a five-year period and a right to remuneration for a further five years after that.

But as with copyright, so with design right. The right must not be one that can be used oppressively or unduly against the interests of the consumer. We must not stifle fair competition, particularly in spare parts. Because spare parts have to fit the product for which they are intended, they must to some extent be a copy of the original design. An unfettered design right could be used by the manufacturers of original equipment to ensure that only they could supply spare parts. That would give rise to a near monopoly for some spare parts, which would be wrong.

On the other hand, it would be equally wrong to allow totally free copying of all spare parts. The Bill will, therefore, allow copying where there is no design freedom for either functional or aesthetic reasons. When I say that there is no design freedom, certain basic things have to be put into a spare part if it is to fit and match the product for which it is intended.

Where there is full design freedom, competitors will have to create their own designs. That will apply to all articles, whether or not they are spare parts. The result will be that copying will be allowed where necessary, and where competition can still occur, but designers will be protected from those who would copy when there is no need for them to do so.

The Registered Designs Act will be amended so that protection will be available only for truly aesthetic, stand-alone designs. Competitors do not need to be able to copy such designs to compete effectively. The term of protection for registered designs is to be increased from a maximum of 15 years to 25 years. All this will ensure that design effort is encouraged without stifling competition, or leaving consumers open to the exploitation of a monopoly position.

We are making changes in parts V and VI to open up the intellectual property system and make it more accessible to its users. The restrictions on who may act for inventors and other applicants in dealings with the Patent Office are to be lifted. The constraints on mixed practices —for example, of patent agents and venture capital advisers—will be relaxed. At present, patent litigation is conducted in the High Court. Many small and innovative firms find that High Court proceedings are so expensive and complex that their patent rights are effectively worthless because they cannot afford to enforce them.

It is of course pointless for Parliament to pass legislation that makes it so expensive to pursue a remedy in the courts that no one can use it, except the very large firms that are adversely affected by some unfair competition. Because only the High Court has jurisdiction, inventors find that sometimes they cannot afford to seek the protection of the law. Similarly, small firms sometimes find it difficult to defend themselves against a large competitor that brings an action against them for an alleged infringement of a patent. I am glad to say that we have established in clauses 267 to 272 the basis of a patents jurisdiction in the county court. We believe that this will significantly reduce cost and complexity, thus enabling smaller firms to compete on a more level footing with larger companies.

The House may be aware that a Bill introduced in the previous Parliament sought to lift the licence of right provisions of the Patents Act 1977 as they applied to patents for pharmaceuticals granted under the Patents Act 1949. That Bill,. which had Government support, fell on dissolution and we have taken this opportunity to reintroduce its provisions.

Finally, part VII contains a number of miscellaneous, but none the less important, provisions. The Government, and I trust the whole House, are firmly opposed to counterfeiting and piracy and we want to stamp out those

[Mr. Clarke]

practices. Those who steal other people's property or who hitch a free ride on the reputations of established businesses will not get any support from the Government, or this House. We know that several British firms suffer from piracy of their products, and often it is the most blatant imitation of their products where the quality of the original is nowhere near matched by the inferior imitation that is put on the market.

Clause 279 introduces substantial new criminal provisions which will prove an invaluable weapon in the fight against product counterfeiting. In particular, I am glad to say that we are taking the opportunity to make the fraudulent use of a trade mark a criminal offence, which will make it very much easier for companies to defend themselves against cheap copies from overseas, particularly from the far east. These changes, taken with the improvement in the sanctions against copyright piracy and bootlegging in parts I and II of the Bill, will, I hope, eliminate these very real threats to legitimate industry.

The Government are continuing to press the case for the European Community Trade Marks Office to be sited in London. In my opinion, it is clearly the best location. Clause 281 provides the necessary statutory authority for financial assistance to be given to the office if sited here.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend has seen the new site of the office where we intend to house the Trade Marks Office at St. Katharine's by the Tower, but has he seen it recently?

Mr. Clarke: I have been there recently. I know that my hon. Friend has been leading a campaign on the matter for some time. The Government wholly support it and we are seeking to impress on the Commission and other members of the Community the case for establishing the European Trade Marks Office in London. There is no doubt that the various contenders are all offering financial support for the office, whether it be in London, Munich or Madrid. For that reason, I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome clause 281, which gives us a statutory authority to match the financial provision that is being offered by rivals.

My brief review of the Bill's provisions would be incomplete without at least a passing reference to clause 280. Great Ormond street hospital is to enjoy a perpetual right to a royalty in respect of certain types of exploitation of "Peter Pan". The Bill ensures that sick children in Great Ormond street will continue to benefit, in spite of the fact that the copyright in the play bequeathed to the hospital expired at the end of 1987.

The Bill does not contain any provision for a blank tape levy. I expect that some of my hon. Friends will be disappointed by that. Whether there should be a levy on blank tape, to provide an income for owners of copyright who think that they are deprived of revenue because copies are taken of their work, has aroused strong feelings for some time. There have been frequent changes of mind by most of those involved. However, we have finally decided that it would be wrong, indefensible and going beyond the principles of the rest of the Bill to try to introduce a blank tape levy that the Government would impose on purchasers of tape and distribute to aggrieved copyright holders.

Although I accept that copyright is difficult to enforce against people who use blank tape to copy, imposing a levy would go beyond the principle of the Bill, which is that we are passing legislation providing legal protection for the intellectual property of the creative artist. It is a step beyond that to say that if the creative artist has difficulty in enforcing copyright, somehow we must levy a new tax to provide a compensating fund that will be distributed to artists who feel aggrieved. If we had a levy, it would involve the Government in the collection of a whole new tax to provide the copyright owner with a financial reward. A new bureaucracy would have to be set up to collect and distribute the proceeds of the levy. The administration cost of any such scheme would almost certainly be disproportionate to the amount of money that was raised.

We were also unhappy about the rough justice element of the levy proposals. Not every blank tape is used to record copyright material, so a levy would be an unfair imposition on many people. Many of those who look to benefit from the levy would be happy to see an element of rough justice imposed on those from whom the money is to be raised, but all attempts to compensate for the rough justice element did not prove workable. Even if one had had a system that enabled some people to have a rebate on the levy if they could demonstrate that they were not copying copyright, they would have been put to the needless inconvenience of making a claim for the rebate. That would have been particularly hard for the blind and visually handicapped, who make extensive use of blank tape in their everyday lives.

We are also not sure whether the whole benefit of the levy would have gone to the performers and the record companies that had a legitimate interest in pressing for it. A levy could have been marked up in the retail chain, with the result that the burden on the consumer would have been considerably more, with those in the retail chain standing to gain almost as much as those for whom the levy was intended.

For all those reasons, the Government have decided not to proceed with the levy. I accept that it is a matter of balance, which is why the Government changed their mind collectively once or twice, as did several hon. Members. But we have come down firmly on the side of the consumer against a levy proposal that we believed was not on all fours in principle with the remainder of the Bill and would have been a costly bureaucracy, creating some unfair burdens on purchasers of blank tape.

As a consolation to my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who might still be attracted by the levy, we have undertaken to table an amendment to the Bill outlawing so-called anti-spoiler devices, which override signals intended by the copyright owner to prevent copying. Copyright owners are seeking to protect themselves against the problem that they face by devising spoiler devices, which would stop anybody using blank tape to copy the original article. As technical advances are made, it is predictable that people might try to put on the market anti-spoiler devices, so that copies could be made of material that the vendor intended should be proof against copying. If the copyright owners are successful in producing spoiler devices, we shall be content to amend the Bill to make sure that the sale of anti-spoiler devices is rendered illegal.

As I am sure I have adequately shown, the Bill is extremely long and sometimes complex, but it has implications for almost every walk of life. I am sure that those attending the debate realise that this aspect of

intellectual property is as important as any other sort of property. It is important to a modern economy that we protect human creativity properly.

People in this country will continue to have ideas, with or without the Bill, but if we are to get the best from those ideas we need an environment in which they can flourish. The Bill provides a framework of legal protection, which should cultivate and nourish creativity. It will provide a fair balance between the providers and users of intellectual property. It will set out the law in a much clearer way than before. It takes account of the rapid pace of technological advance. It makes the intellectual property system more relevant and accessible to the needs of British business. In short, the Bill will encourage creative talent, enterprise and fair competition. I commend it to the House.

5.5 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): As the Minister claimed, the Bill is a welcome, not to say courageous, attempt to reform a complex and difficult area. I think that everybody recognises that the present state of the law is unsatisfactory, out of date and needs reform. For example, the Copyright Act 1956 has been described by a High Court judge as labyrinthine. No one will disagree with that. Whether the present Bill, with its 285 clauses and eight schedules, can easily be acquitted of the same charge we have yet to see.

It is clear that the ground has been prepared carefully by Governments of varying political persuasions over a long period. As the Minister said, perhaps the beginning of that process was the Whitford report of 1977. There have been Green Papers and a major White Paper since then. At variour stages, Governments and others have changed their mind on important matters that arise in the attempt to reform. I make the modest prediction now that further and, indeed, substantial changes are yet to come, perhaps not least on some of the matters that the Minister touched upon in his speech.

It may be asked whether all that effort is worth while. The answer that we in the Opposition give, which I am sure is the same as the Minister's, is that of course it is worth while. It is an extremely important industry. It is sometimes difficult to define, but it is undoubtedly important. Estimates of its economic importance vary. A useful small study was carried out by the Common Law Institute of Intellectual Property. I think that Jennifer Phillips was the author. It was published in 1985 and was called "The Economic Importance of Copyright". Jennifer Phillips' estimate was that the copyright industries, which she defined very narrowly and modestly as industries that directly and substantially depend on copyright for their commercial viability, accounted for 2·6 per cent. of gross domestic product, which meant that in importance they exceeded both the motor car and food manufacturing industries. It should be noted that that definition excluded the functional design aspect of manufacturing and the rapidly growing computer service industry. A more generous view of the importance of the industry was taken last year by the Confederation of Information Communication Industries, which estimated a total turnover of over £20 billion, which it put at over 7 per cent. of GDP.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the industry is not just its current importance to our economy, although that is substantial, but the potential that it holds for our future economic development. I think that there are few people who would look to a successful British economy without seeing that economy developing in the direction of new technologies, particularly information technology, computers and data processing, as well as building on our well-known successes in the older and better established copyright industries such as publishing, films, music and so on. In other words, it is important—we in the Opposition recognise this—to make it clear that we see a future for the British economy that is not the low-tech, no-tech future that the Chancellor of the Exchequer notoriously, on one occasion, professed to see as the way forward. We shall perhaps carry the whole House today in recognising that great efforts are required to ensure that our future lies in the high-tech, science-based industries —industries that call upon the talents and skills of our people.

If we are to do that, of course we have to provide an appropriate legal framework so that those ideas can be developed. We must ensure that the research is done. We must give priority to the spirit of inquiry and to the pursuit of knowledge which has served us so well in the past. However, we must do more than that. As the Minister said, we must establish a climate in which such enterprise can flourish. Let me widen the debate for a moment. We need not just a legal framework but Government support and the provision of resources. In that context, today's news that the Science museum has at long last been compelled by Government parsimony to propose entrance charges—the last of the south Kensington museums to do so—sits ill with the Minister's commendable concern for providing the right framework for the development of scientific and other knowledge.

The proper regulation of copyright involves a great number of difficulties, most of which the Minister identified, and we entirely agree with him on them. However, our interpretation may differ a little at times. The first problem is that the whole business of developing knowledge, conducting research and taking the fruits of that research has become increasingly international in nature. The sale of the products of the older industries —the publishing, film and music industries—is increasingly international, and the use of computers and information technology means that it is yet more difficult in today's climate to grapple effectively on a national basis with the problems thrown up by the unfair or illegal exploitation of people's property in an international context. That is why we welcome the emphasis that the Bill places on the need to ensure that not only do we establish our own legal framework but that this country—traditionally a pioneer in these matters—shows the way to others and ensures that they can follow that way. That is why we welcome the Minister's declaration of intention on the Berne convention and strongly support his proposed measures to stamp out some of the abuses that arise, not so much in this country—although they do arise here—but overseas.

The confederation estimates that copyright piracy alone costs more than £500 million per annum. My friends in the Open university are very clear that there is an extremely fruitful and profitable trade open to them through the sale of their excellent educational materials around the world if only they could be sure that those materials would not be pirated and sold off with no return to them. Because that happens, they are denied that lucrative market. It is important that we should establish not just a domestic but an international framework in

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

which such abuses can be dealt with. It is also correct to say that the problems of copyright are matched entirely by problems of patent protection, which is why we very much welcome the measure on counterfeiting.

The real problems in regulating copyright arise from a number of difficulties peculiar to the kind of property that we are discussing. The first of those problems bedevils much of the Bill and no doubt accounted for many man and woman hours of drafting and deliberation. It is the problem of defining the property that we are trying to protect. In 1709, it was possible to say of the first modern Copyright Act, the Act of Ann, that it was for

"the encouragement of learned men to compose and write useful books."

It is not only the sexism of that description that is outdated. While the principle remains the same, we have now moved into an era in which the products of human skill and ingenuity take many different forms. We preserve those products in many different ways. It is not just the printed page but the computer disk, not just the work of art but the sound or video recording to which we must now give the protection of the law of property. New technology and fresh developments in knowledge have produced new forms of property, and one of the major problems to be dealt with in the Bill is the definition of that property and those whose interests in it deserve protection.

New technology has thrown up another range of problems. It has ensured that that new form of property can be passed from hand to hand, traded in and exploited and can have its benefits appropriated in a whole range of ways which were not available 20 years ago and which are certainly not possible for other forms of property. The technology that has made this property and the benefits to be obtained from it almost infinitely capable of reproduction—the photocopier, sound and video recordings, the personal computer and the floppy disk—places in the hands of each of us, at virtually no outlay and with very little chance of detection, the means of taking the benefits of property created by and belonging to others.

We come now to the most interesting aspect of the Bill, from a more general point of view. The developments to which I have referred have brought even the Government to the realisation that there are problems that simply cannot be left to market forces alone. Let us be clear that the Bill is a massive exercise in intervention in the market. We approve of that; we are glad that the Government have recognised the need to intervene. However, it is worthwhile accepting and identifying the respects in which the market does not solve the problems. The point that I make is very similar to the one that the Minister himself conceded; it is the language that is different, and perhaps less acceptable to Conservative Members.

The market at present, if left to its own devices, poses two main and contradictory dangers. First, there is the danger that if excessive protection is provided to private ownership of the property of ideas, it will frustrate and inhibit the advance of knowledge to the very general disadvantage. In other words, it would allow the person who got there first to prevent the rest of us from following, and it would allow restrictive practices to arise and to become a bar to further inquiry and the development of knowledge. Clearly, left to itself, the market is incapable of resolving that difficulty.

On the other hand, an inadequate protection of property rights would mean that there would be an inadequate return—perhaps none—to those prepared to invest time, money, skill and effort in the advancement of knowledge or the perfection of talents. That would prejudice the continued production of such property. The very property whose production the market was meant to stimulate would therefore be jeopardised.

We are dealing with a clear case of market failure. The need for intervention shows clearly that the market has its limitations—both in the individual's and in the public's interests. It also reveals one further element in the market, sometimes concealed in the more far-flung rhetoric of Conservative Members—the fact that the market is not a God-given or natural law institution that operates with a hidden hand to dispense justice or exercise moral judgments but a man-made social institution, created by rules that we, among others, make and have made. It is an institution that depends for its operation on rules to do with people's property rights, the sanctity of contracts and so on. The Bill is no less welcome for the fact that it makes that aspect of market operations clear.

The Minister concluded by referring to one possible candidate for inclusion in the Bill that did not make the final draft. The problem illustrates the difficulties to which I have just referred. On occasions, the market breaks down. It simply fails to reward those who produce the valuable property in a given area. Over recent years we have paid particular attention to the problems of the music industry. I want to say a word about that in a moment, but there are similar breakdowns in other spheres. In some cases, but not all, the Government have recognised the problem and have tried in varying ways to deal with it. There are problems in respect of photocopying and the copying of software; the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), who intervened in the Minister's speech, pointed out that clause 63 gives cause for concern. There are problems about the recording of video productions and broadcasting cinematic films on television.

In all those cases the market breaks down in that, often because of a technological intervention, it fails to reward those who produced the property. Either the reward is never paid or it goes to somebody different. The Government are rightly aware of the danger that the incentive to go on producing is lost. Therefore, some means has to be found of rewarding those who are responsible for production so that production continues.

The view is widely held that the problem occurs most acutely in the music industry. It is easy sometimes for hon. Members to underestimate the importance of the music indusry to the economy. I have the advantage of having been a lifelong fan of what is called, sometimes pejoratively, pop music. If over recent years my interest has flagged slightly, it has been rapidly revived by the insistence of my teenage children on playing such music loudly in our home. So in a sense I am compelled to continue my interest. Mostly it is an enjoyable pastime.

Pop music is not just the preoccupation of many younger citizens but is of considerable economic importance. The industry sold over £2 billion worth of goods in 1985. One in four of worldwide hit records originates in this country. The industry has produced overseas earnings of £400 million. It employs 26,000 people. In many respects it is a breeding ground for new

small businesses and for new talent. It is exactly the sort of industry which the Government have always proclaimed they wish to help.

The Government understand the problems which home taping cause for the music industry. It is difficult to quantify exactly how great the problem is, but I suspect that most of us are aware personally of instances where records are taped for the use of people who might in other circumstances have bought the records themselves. Sometimes, perhaps more justifiably, the purchaser of a record will tape it so that it can be played in a cassette recorder in a car, for instance. That is equally a denial of the return to which the producer of the music is entitled.

The Government cannot at this point say that they have changed their mind on the fundamental of the debate, which is that at one point they recognised that there was a substantial loss, difficult to quantify to the last pound, which unfairly prejudiced not only individuals and firms within the industry but the overall future of the industry. If the problem exists—as the Government were prepared to recognise in the Green Paper and in the White Paper —it is likely to get worse because the technology which created it will develop.

We already have compact discs. We will have digital audio tape. The rental business is flourishing. When the Bill was given a Second Reading in another place, the noble Lord Winchilsea and Nottingham painted a graphic picture of what he had seen in Japan, where people in huge numbers go to super-stores where they borrow for a small fee compact discs to record on their own cassette tapes; then they return the discs for other people to do likewise. No doubt that business will spread to other countries.

The problem has been recognised by the Government and it will get worse. In their White Paper the Government proposed the solution of a levy on blank tapes. No one would dispute that in many respects that is objectionable. We understand exactly what the Minister had in mind when he talked about the rough justice of that solution. But he did not adequately address the problem of the rough justice which is suffered by musicians and others who produce the music. That solution is also objectionable because it would prejudice various people such as the blind and educational institutions. If it is pursued, special arrangements would have to be made for some categories. We agree with the Minister's view that the collecting arrangements leave something to be desired. Certainly we would examine critically any solution which meant that money was passed back to major record companies but did not find its way to those who deserve the support and on whose efforts the future of the music industry depends. If a means were found of making a return to the producer of music, we would want to ensure that it encouraged small and new performers of innovative music and the parts of the music business which are inadequately rewarded but whose ingenuity has to be stimulated and encouraged if the industry is to have a future economically and culturally.

We share the objections to a levy on blank tapes. We do not want a system which merely makes Madonna richer but does not do anything for the creation of music. Having marched themselves up to the top of the hill, having reached the top of the hill, having got a clear view of the problem and having accepted that it is a difficult problem with which the music industry needs help, the Government cannot say, "We are turning our back on the problem; we shall march back to the bottom of the hill and leave things exactly as they are." The Government cannot go away from it without attempting to deal with the problem. Apart from the interests of the music industry, the Government seem to have no intention of changing the law or of ensuring that the illegal taping done by millions our fellow citizens is brought to an end.

I do not dispute for a moment that it is a difficult problem, not just as it affects music. I urge the Government to recognise that they have a responsibility which they have not yet discharged. In Committee and on the remaining stages of the Bill we shall do what we can constructively to help the Government to reach at least a partial solution. I suspect that in this and other areas perfect solutions are not available and are not on the agenda, but the Government cannot be allowed to get away with offering no solution.

Let me now point to a further instance of the difficulties which arise in the Bill. The Minister drew attention to the provisions which attempt to deal with the issue of a design right. That has exercised many of us in the House and, indeed, people outside the House and in the other place. The problem arises because of the uncertain state of the law, which was left even more uncertain by the decision of the House of Lords in British Leyland v. Armstrong and by the intervention of the EEC Commission in the case of my constituent, the Ford Motor Company.

The problem is how to protect what is called in the Bill a design right. Although it is dealt with generally in the Bill by clause 198 and succeeding clauses, a particular problem arises in respect of spare parts. Let us be clear that that is the case. On the one hand, a range of manufacturers, such as Ford and Hoover, take one view while, on the other hand, the specialist manufacturers of spare parts, quite understandably, take a different view.

The principles are very familiar. On the one hand, we need to protect the consumer against market abuse, but guard against excessive protection and, on the other hand, we must ensure that the originators and designers of products are given fair protection so that they continue to furnish the market with their products.

I assure the Minister that I do not intend to be critical, because we have no better solution to offer, but the Government's answer is a partial protection of design right, as contained in clause 198 and succeeding clauses. It is fair to say that the definitions have caused some difficulty. They caused extensive debate and difficulty in the other place, particularly in respect of what have become called the "must fit" and "must match" requirements—for example, the treatment of constituent parts of the whole item, such as a dinner service. We believe that the Government understand the problem and have made a genuine attempt, in good faith, to deal with it. However, as the Minister showed, the phrase "striking the right balance" is likely to figure largely in our deliberations on the Bill.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves this point, will he comment on the proposition put forward by the Confederation of British Industry and others to the effect that design copyright should not be excluded, but should exist alongside design right?

Mr. Gould: There are some obvious difficulties with design copyright, because it is a more extensive concept than design right. It swings the balance in favour of protection, as against free entry to the market. Those are

[Mr. Gould]

some of the points that Opposition Members—and members of the Committee—wish to look at carefully to strike the right balance. I made the point that, in the attempt to strike that balance, the Government have not convinced us that they have identified the right criterion. Whether a design must fit or must match another article is not self-evidently the issue which should decide whether a design secures protection or otherwise. What we are inclined to argue—we shall certainly return to this issue in Committee—is that it may be that the Government have approached what is undoubtedly a difficult problem from the wrong viewpoint. I offer the thought to the Minister —my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) will wish to develop it in Committee—that it may be more effective and constructive to look at the problem in the same way as do other countries with similar problems. It is a problem of fair competition and of dealing with restrictive practices, rather than a problem relating to the protection of property rights

The Bill bristles with specific problems, but we accept that the Government have made an effort to resolve many of them. There is much in the Bill to be welcomed, which is why we do not propose to vote against it. We recognise the importance and value, for example, of the chapter on moral rights. That is a welcome change. That chapter provides moral rights for all kinds of authors and film directors. In view of earlier events in the Chamber this afternoon, one could wish that moral rights were provided also to the authors of the resolutions of the national executive committee of the Labour party. We have a moral right to ensure that the terms of such resolutions are not distorted when they are reported to this House.

We welcome also the attempt to grapple with new problems—for example, computer-generated designs, works of art and program. It is refreshing to see this legislature getting to grips with that problem ahead of anybody else in the world. We are the first legislature to recognise the advent—not here yet, but coming—of artificial intelligence.

We recognise also that a special balance has to be struck where the needs of education institutions are involved. We believe that the Government, broadly speaking, have that balance about right in respect of schools and libraries. However, that will not preclude us from tabling amendments that may improve those provisions.

I have mentioned already that we welcome the change in the law with regard to counterfeiting and the creation of a new criminal offence to deal with the wrongful use of trade marks. I am glad to offer again my support for the campaign in which the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) has taken the lead, but in which we have both been involved. It is a campaign to establish a Community Trade Marks Office in this country. I had hoped that the Minister would have been able to offer, not only more information, but perhaps a slightly more optimistic assessment of our chances of obtaining that institution in Britain.

Some of our noble Friends in another place deserve credit for what has been become known as the "Peter Pan" clause. Given the perpetual nature of the rights obtained by the Great Ormond street hospital, it is an appropriate description of that clause, which we support.

I have said enough to show that there remains much that needs to be scrutinised critically, for example, clause 63 which was raised earlier. We argue again that the provision of a one-year protection for computer software programs is not likely to be enough.

Mr. Boyes: The Minister has given me an assurance that photography will be carefully considered by the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), in Committee. I understand that my hon. Friend will not be dealing with the Bill in Committee, but will he mention to our hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who will be leading for the Opposition in Committee, that among the many things that have been mentioned as needing special scrutiny are several important clauses on moral rights, relating to photography? As many hon. Members, who have their photographs taken up and down the country know, photography is an important profession. It is important that we look carefully during the Committee stage at what has been taken away from photographers, as well as what has been given to them. I hope that my hon. Friend will give me that assurance.

Mr. Gould: I am in the happy position of being able to respond to my hon. Friend with the same generosity as was shown by the Minister. I can give him an assurance on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield that, when he takes the Bill through Committee, he will give attention to this important point, along with the others we wish to scrutinise.

In conclusion, we give a general welcome to the Bill. We do not think it is a perfect Bill by any means. Its imperfections are evident. It may be that, despite our best efforts, the imperfections cannot be adequately remedied. However, we shall do what we can to ensure that they are given proper debate and scrutiny. We shall play our part in trying to remedy the defects that we can identify. It will be our intention to ensure that the Bill, despite its existing values and virtues, emerges as a better Bill than it is now. If we can get proper answers to some of these difficult questions and make this a better Bill, we shall have done something for the intellectual life and economic future of this country.

5.38 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): This is an important Bill on an important subject. It is such an important subject that it is regrettable that there are not more Opposition Members present. I accept that the title, Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill, is not likely to cause a street demonstration in the United Kingdom. However, it is no exaggeration to say that income to major companies in this country from licence fees and royalties is important, and will become increasingly important. It may be the difference between the success and failure of a commercial enterprise.

The Copyright Act 1956 is widely recognised as being in need of replacement. It has protected broadcasts since then, but that was before Telstar was launched. It restricted the circumstances in which photocopies could be made, but it predated the launch of the plain paper copier. It covered computer programs, but when it was passed a computer was virtually the size of a house and could perform only simple arithmetical tasks. So the Bill is here

to replace a 32-year-old Act which has done its best, labyrinthine though it may have been, to protect emerging technologies.

I pay tribute to the officials in the Department of Trade and Industry and in the Patent Office, who have laboured long and hard on the White Paper, for putting up with me and for preparing the Bill.

My first concern about the Bill is whether it adequately prepares the way for and to cover developing technologies. The speed of change in the past 32 years is as nothing compared with what is happening now. People to whom I have spoken in the computer industry have said that if, for any reason, they had to leave that industry for even only three years they would have to retrain completely. I am worried that the language of the Bill is still the language of the 1956 Act, although lip service may have been paid to new technology.

For example, nowhere in the Bill—I stand to be corrected—can I find a definition of computer software, which I should have thought was an important item to be defined in 1988. I understand that in the information technology industry work is being done on what might be described as the legal implications of information technology. Such work should be broad enough in scope to embrace evolutions in technology. No one expects the Government to go in for futurology to such an extent that they can anticipate what technology may throw up in the next 10 or 15 years, but somehow the Bill must find a way of providing a framework to cope with problems as they develop. Perhaps the Secretary of State will be able to do that by order.

In recent years there has been a need for private Members' measures, such as the one introduced so successfully by my hon. Friends the Members for Corby (Mr. Powell) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright). However, I question whether we should rely on private Members' activities, important and successful though they are, given that we are introducing legislation as fundamental as this. If new technology is to be fully protected, several subtle issues must be dealt with, and they do not appear to have been addressed in the Bill.

For example, is a program stored in a computer an idea because it is intangible in form? How should access to software be defined to prevent unauthorised copying and unauthorised use? There is a danger that unless the Bill is significantly amended to deal with the areas I am discussing we shall create a legislative Maginot line, around which future technological developments will flow with ease.

I want to examine one or two of the terms used in the Bill. The term "adaption" is used. Adaption means

> "Infringement by making adaption or act done in relation to adaption."

That definition is extremely narrow and must be inadequate to cover the adaption of a data base by selection rearrangement or paraphrase. Not enough attention has been given in the appropriate quarters to embracing the concept of what a computer data base is. Throughout the Bill the language is orientated towards literary works—copying and reproducing them—and whether authors will receive their benefits, and so on. Yet we are talking now about technologies that need protecting. Elsewhere in the Bill the term "reprographic copying" is used. Are those terms sufficient definitions to cover down-loading? Probably not.

The word "electronic" is also used. It is almost a sop; in some appropriate corner, the word electronic was thrown down as an inadequately sized blanket to cover any known future device. But electronic must be only part of the story. It does not embrace all types of machine-readable information.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) gave the Bill credit for discussing computer generation, and said that we were the first legislature to examine artificial intelligence. Is the definition of computer generation in the Bill clear enough? Is there a distinction between computer-generated and man-generated? Data bases can be generated by computers, and that is the real problem for the future.

I shall not detain the House with more examples, but I am sure that the Standing Committee will need to examine these matters carefully. Copyright is a broad and simple concept. It is infringed by anyone who appropriates the intellectual creations of another. The Bill has missed the chance to state that basic principle simply, but it should contain powers to add by secondary legislation new forms of infringement. If the Secretary of State had such powers, he would be able to define new forms of infringing acts as advances in technology called for them.

Technological change is not the only impetus towards reform. The 1956 Act got into a rare mess over industrial designs. It is inconceivable that when the House passed that Act any hon. Member thought that he or she was establishing a regime for the protection of exhaust pipes, but, for reasons too complicated and arcane to go into here, functional designs such as exhaust pipes have fallen within copyright and received protection for the lifetime of the designer plus 50 years. That is far too long, and something must replace copyright as the means of protecting functional designs.

The White Paper promised a new form of protection lasting 10 years, with the provision that in the second five years licences should be available as of right. That was a reasonable compromise, although many thought it was a fair-weather umbrella giving protection only during the early part of a product's life, when there is no market for spares. The Bill includes what are known as the "must fit" and "must match" exceptions—the antithesis of the well-known maxim in copyright circles: if it is worth copying, it is worth protecting.

The Government must understand that this means that manufacturers of goods that require spare parts—not only motor cars but many other mechanical products, including domestic appliances—will have to load all their development costs on to the products themselves, allowing for the reimbursement that they would have received for spare parts. Spares will have to be priced on a cost-plus basis to compete. The consumer may be able to get parts for his car more cheaply, but the car will cost him more to begin with. According to a recent CBI study, if the Bill is enacted along those lines, protection in the United Kingdom will be substantially less than that available to our competitors abroad in their domestic markets.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I agree with my right hon. Friend's observations. Does he also accept, on the question of copying spare parts such as body panels, that the copiers will tend to concentrate on those parts for which there is a high demand and that the price of those body panels on more outdated models, which tend to be vehicles used by people on lower incomes, will increase

[Mr. Tim Janman]

because only the original equipment manufacturer will still have any interest in making them available in the market place?

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: I agree with my hon. Friend. However, it is not the matters that are in the Bill which most concern me, but those that are not in the Bill.

The White Paper promised that the Patent Office would be hived off and removed from the constraints of the Civil Service within which it plays a role not unlike that played perhaps by Siberia within the Soviet Union. The Government have now concluded that it is not a paying proposition, because so much of its work is now diverted under the European patent convention to Munich instead it will be sent to Newport.

It would be much more to the point to hive off the Trade Marks Registry which at present forms part of the Patent Office. The two are in no way interdependent. The Trade Marks Registry makes a healthy profit from renewal fees. The registry could be left in London and the most could be made of whatever slim chance remains of having the Community Trade Marks Office in this country. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) who has slogged long, hard and admirably on the matter and I hope that his efforts are rewarded with success.

On the question of the levy, one is inevitably drawn back to consider the White Paper of April 1986. Paragraph 6.1 states:

"When the present Copyright Act was enacted in 1956 relatively few people had the facility to make recordings in their homes. Since then technology has advanced rapidly and inexpensive recording equipment is now readily available. Today most homes have at least one piece of audio recording equipment, typically a cassette recorder facility forming part of a hi-fi or music centre. Video recorder ownership is also widespread."

In paragraph 6.3, the White Paper goes on:

"The copyright interests have long expressed concern that their rights are unenforceable in practice. Attempts to prevent home taping by spoiler systems have not proved feasible. Nor have the copyright owners been able to obtain what they consider to be appropriate levels of remuneration in respect of home taping through voluntary licensing schemes because consumers did not take these up in sufficient numbers. It is argued that the only way copyright owners can be remunerated is by introducing a levy on recording equipment . . . and/or on blank recording tape."

Paragraph 6.4 goes on:

"The 1985 Green Paper discussed the issues involved. It commented that while home recorders had become commonplace, the benefits of the new technology had accrued solely to the general public and tape and recorder manufacturers, and that home taping was a major use of copyright material for which copyright owners received no payment. It went on to invite comments on the proposal that there should be a statutory requirement for the payment of a levy on the sale of blank tape, and perhaps also on recording equipment. Comments were invited both on the principle of a levy and on details of a suggested scheme for administering it."

The first Green Paper was produced and, after consultation, the Government made their decision, which is set out in paragraph 6.6 of the White Paper:

"After giving full and careful consideration to all the opinions expressed in response to the 1985 Green Paper, the Government has concluded that:

(a) copyright owners and performers should be remunerated for the use of their material and performances by those who tape them at home to the prejudice of the legitimate interests of copyright owners;

(b) there is no realistic alternative to a compulsory levy on blank recording tape as a means of providing such remuneration; and

(c) any levy scheme should give the public an entitlement to record for private purposes.

In reaching these conclusions and in determining what legislative provisions should be introduced, the Government has had particular regard to the need to put the law on a sensible and—as far as possible—enforceable basis, as well as the need to balance the interests of copyright owners and performers with those of the public at large. While it has no wish to deny consumers the convenience of modern recording technology, the Government considers that copyright owners and performers—and not merely the manufacturers and importers of blank tape and recording equipment—should obtain some economic benefit from home-taping. It should be noted that a number of other governments have reached the same conclusion. Thus, legislative provision for a levy on blank tape has already been introduced in the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Portugal, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The introduction of a levy is also under active consideration in a number of other countries."

Paragraph 6.7 continues:

"The Government does not accept the suggestion that private copying should be legalised without any provision for a levy. It is likely that this would be incompatible with the United Kingdom's current obligations under the Brussels text of the Berne Convention and with the Paris text of that Convention which the Government intends to ratify. The fact that rights cannot be enforced at present is not a justification for their removal; rather it is an argument that the law should be amended to ensure that the owners of rights are able to derive benefit from them."

Paragraph 6.9 states:

"It has been argued that whilst a levy might have been justified a few years ago when the record industry was in difficulties, the industry is now profitable and does not need further subsidy. However, the levy will be neither a subsidy nor compensation for lost sales or reduced profitability: it will be a payment of the right to use property—namely the right to make recordings of copyright material for private purposes—and will thus be totally independent of the profitability of the record industry (or indeed the financial standing of composers, lyricists and performers)."

One could ask what external legal event, what judgment by the House of Lords and what further additions to the Berne convention have happened since April 1986. The answer is none. There has been the arrival of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who is not legally qualified.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, he is.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: I meant that he is not legally qualified in a practising sense. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is not only highly qualfied, but is learned in the best sense of that term.

When I was a law student at Cambridge, I used to read those journals in which people would say, "Go away and consult the authorities on this matter." They did not mean the local authorities, but, in contract, Cheshire and Fifoot and, in real property, Megarry. My right hon. and learned Friend does not claim to be an authority on that subject, but he has formed a judgment about the rough justice and believes that it falls on the other side of the line to that which the Government upheld in April 1986. I do not agree with that. The hon. Member for Dagenham said that he would not press the House to a Division and, with the absence of his hon. Friends, I can well understand that. However, if he had done so, I would have been unable to

support the Government's proposal on the levy, although I like many aspects of the Bill. This is an important principle and one must recognise that differences of opinion exist.

I have enumerated the countries that have already taken the view that a levy is a sensible way forward. We await—goodness knows when—a Green Paper from the European Commission. We appear to have been waiting for it for rather a long time and, when it arrives, we suspect that it may well recommend a levy. With the Department of Trade and Industry's harmonisation campaign for 1992, one must have the uncomfortable feeling that, at some stage, there will be a need for the Government, whether in 1992 or 1993, to come back to the House and put the matter right.

In the past 10 days there have been some changes in the Government's position. They have been known to amend their view. Such changes used to be called U-turns, but that is a rather unfashionable term now. However, as a result of its complexity this subject has understandably become something of a U-turn charter. Differences have occurred between the Green Paper, the White Paper and the Bill. On the fair dealing provisions, the Secretary of State has taken one view, changed his mind and then considered changing it back again. I am not criticising him, because these are difficult issues.

As the hon. Member for Dagenham said earlier, we are likely to see various changes not only to some of the parts that have been specified today, but of the sort that I hope will make this legislation as good as it needs to be because of the reliance of British industry, commerce and business on the protection of our intellectual property.

6 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) said that he would probably not support the Government on the levy on blank tapes, so he might be considered to be a dangerous Member to put on the Standing Committee. However, it would be disappointing if he were not appointed, because he obviously has considerable knowledge of this complex subject and this detailed and complex Bill.

I give the Bill a general welcome. Its updating of our copyright law is generally welcome on both sides of the House. It is clear that, although the Bill as a whole will not be contentious, some parts of it will generate some contention and discussion. Hon. Members who have spoken so far have already identified the areas which will give rise to debate.

The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton referred to the difficulty of coping with what is inevitably a continually changing scene. We must make laws today for events and developments in the year 2000 that we cannot imagine now. The very nature of intellectual property means that today's legislation will have to be continually updated. We are dealing with a continually developing market, with new technologies and new ideas emerging all the time.

I want to deal with various items in three categories —those which we welcome, those on which the Government have probably not gone far enough or on which the position is somewhat unclear, and the levy on blank tapes, on which the Bill is unacceptably silent.

In common with other hon. Members, I welcome the strengthened measures against counterfeiting. The provision for the continuation of the "Peter Pan" royalties to the Great Ormond street hospital will be welcome throughout the House. They are no substitute for adequate funding for the National Health Service, but they form an important part of that hospital's income and their continuation is welcome.

Contrary to some previous speakers, I generally welcome the steps that the Government have taken on the so-called "spare parts" provisions. I hope that the Government will stand firm on the inclusion of exemptions to the proposed unregistered design rights—the so-called "must fit" and "must match" exemptions, despite the considerable argument and pressure which there will no doubt be.

A considerable number of jobs are at stake among car body panel manufacturers. My impression from what the Minister said was that designs that were subject to exemption were such that they did not involve much in the way of inventive mind or imagination. Therefore, I do not accept the CBI's argument in its circular that no protection could mean no new products. We are not dealing with areas where there is considerable imagination and inventiveness. The competition that could be engendered through such exemptions could lead to benefits to the consumer and to the safeguarding of many thousands of jobs in the motor spare parts industry.

Let me deal now with areas where the Bill is not entirely satisfactory. The inadequate protection for computer software programs in clause 63 and the single year of protection given to record rentals have already been referred to. Record rentals have not yet caught on in a big way in Britain, but I understand that in countries such as Japan that is a big industry, particularly since the arrival of compact discs. The amount of record rental and recording there is substantial.

As the Minister said, how long music is marketable is a matter of judgment, but there is a general feeling in the record industry that one year is not long enough. It does not give adequate protection to people who have invested their creative skills and talents in producing music and I hope that, as the Bill progresses through the House, some longer period of protection will be given.

Clause 36 and the special provisions for the photocopying of material for local education authorities is another area that I should like to see amended. As I understand the present position, there is a voluntary agreement between the local education authorities and the copyright owners—the co-called copyright licensing agency licence—where it has been accepted that education establishments may copy up to 5 per cent. of a book per annum. Under clause 36, that would be reduced to 4 per cent. per annum, in quarterly batches of 1 per cent. The dates are not always helpful to local education authorities since at least one quarter will largely cover the school summer holiday. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities would like a compromise on that. Five per cent. would be preferable, but if there are considerations in the Berne convention which limit it to 4 per cent., it might be easier and more helpful to local education authorities and schools if that could be done in two half-yearly batches of 2 per cent. That would overcome the problem where at least one of the quarters would largely fall during a holiday.

[Mr. James Wallace]

I have received representations from constituents on the Bill as it affects broadcasting, following some discussions in the newspapers on the extent to which interviewees have a copyright. People in broadcasting to whom I spoke earlier today feel that the position has not yet been satisfactorily clarified. Obvious areas of concern are where a reporter goes into the street with a microphone and takes off-the-cuff remarks from people and programmes such as those of Roger Cook involving consumer investigations where interviews are often of a hostile nature with someone trying to protect practices in which they have been engaged and which may not always meet with public approval.

There is still some doubt whether such interviews can be repeated after an initial live broadcast or whether the person who gave the interview has a copyright of the recording which, if he exercised that right, would prevent any further broadcast of the interview.

We would all regret seeing any unnecessary restraint on journalism, and the view in the industry is that the present position is not satisfactory. It has been suggested that there can be an implied consent by the interviewee. That will not be clear in a case when someone has said something which he would rather not have said and if an albeit honest statement might put that person in a bad light. Implied consent or implied licence is always revocable.

The other argument was that an interview was not a work qualifying for protection under the Bill. There is a great deal of judicial authority which suggests that one does not have to do very much for one's words and utterances to become a work and subject to protection. If further clarification on that point can be given, so much the better.

Every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate has referred to the absence of any provision for a levy on blank tapes. That is a serious omission. The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton has alredy referred, in his quotations from the White Paper, to the Government's complete about—turn from their position two years ago. Although I was not an avid reader of the Conservative campaign guide at the last general election, I believe that it contained a commitment to a levy on blank tapes.

Earl Ferrers made a very persuasive contribution in another place when he moved an amendment in respect of a levy on blank tapes. Indeed, I suspect that he was so persuasive that he was brought into the Government team to prevent him from having another opportunity to persuade their Lordships about the merits of his argument.

I listened to the Minister's arguments about why the levy should not be introduced. We would all accept that the argument is finely balanced and we can all readily see the pros and cons. The Minister said that Parliament has given rights to singers, musicians and composers and they should not have to come to us for help if their rights are not readily enforced. We cannot accept that argument just like that. If the rights that Parliament has granted to people cannot be enforced and are not effective, it behoves us to reconsider the matter to discover whether there is anything else that we can do to ensure that their rights are protected.

The Minister said that this is a pretty rough and ready measure. We should also consider the public lending right. Considering the number of libraries in the country, very few are chosen as the sample on which to base the remuneration payments to authors. That system is pretty rough and ready. However, it has been accepted that people whose skills and talents lie in creative and artistic works, be that the written word, spoken word or song, should be entitled to some return for their creativity.

It was suggested in another place that the public lending right system would raise about £7 million. Although that may be a small amount of money when we consider the vast amounts raised in taxation each year, if that money were distributed among musicians, singers and composers it would be very beneficial. Many of those people do not have large incomes. If they are to be allowed time to express ther creative talents, that extra money—albeit relatively small in terms of the total taxation take—might allow them to further their careers and talents in a way which would not otherwise be possible.

I am sure that amendments providing for a levy will be introduced in Committee and we will certainly support them. We accept that there will be problems for blind and deaf people. It is not beyond the wit of the House to find appropriate arrangments to allow for the imposition of a levy and its collection without too much bureaucracy and, at the same time, take account of those people with a special case for exemption.

I hope that a constructive approach will be taken to the Bill. I am certain that Opposition Members will table constructive amendments. I hope that the Government will listen and be prepared to concede where they believe that a reasoned and well-argued case has been made. As has already been said, intellectual property and its protection are important for stimulating creativity and enterprise. The provisions in the Bill assist that. The Bill is also of considerable economic importance for us, not least as we approach 1992 and the single European market. Subject to reservations that will no doubt be debated, we welcome the Bill.

6.14 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I want to describe the background to my interest in this subject. I spent 18 years in manufacturing industry, originally as a tyre designer. I am the co-holder of a number of patents. I was also a marketing manager interested in trade marks, branding and naming. I am a non-executive director of Interbrand Group plc. I give advice to Grant, Spencer Caisley and Porteus and to the Industrial Anti-Counterfeiting Group. I am vice-president of the Institute of Trading Standards Administration and chairman of the Community Trade Marks Office committee. I apologise for recounting that list, but it shows that I take a strong interest in intellectual property.

I want to thank everyone who has supported me over the past few years in our campaign to increase the interest in intellectual property. I welcome the Bill and congratulate my right hon. and noble Friend in another place, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry and his colleagues on including in the Bill many of the things for which we have been campaigning with regard to intellectual property matters for almost a decade. I congratulate everyone on bringing that about. No doubt such action was taken with 1992 in mind and induced by the Government's clear recognition of the importance of intellectual property.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said in another place:

"Intellectual property is of substantial economic significance. It forms the foundations of major industries . . .A recent study concluded that 2·6 per cent. of GDP is generated by copyright based industries."—

that is just copyright.

"If one were to take into account industries which rely heavily on patents and designs"—

and I would add trade marks—

"the figure would obviously be higher still."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 November 1987; Vol. 489, c. 1476.]

As was stated earlier, intellectual property is clearly an area of enormous significance. However, until recently, it was not recognised by the nation, or the House, as having that degree of significance.

It will be difficult to achieve in the Bill all the balances to encourage this great creator of wealth for our industries. We should remind ourselves of the enormous importance of our brand names, trade marks and inventions. They are seen by people throughout Europe and further afield—and particularly in the newly developing countries—as highly attractive and extremely valuable. If there are any short cuts available to those countries to overcome the high cost and staffing difficulties of industrial research and creating brand names, images and market penetrations, the protection of intellectual property—the protection of our copyrights, design rights, patents and trade marks—will prove in the competitive years to 1992 and beyond to be an absolutely vital part of our industrial economic strategy.

We must get the balance of protection right in the Bill to protect United Kingdom interests, to allow us access to our partners in Europe into the single market in 1992. Innovation, the protection of our clever, new designs and existing designs, will be all-important.

As well as my interest in intellectual property, I have a constituency interest in the midlands and I share a constituency border with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Consumer Affairs. I accept that there is a difficult but important balance to achieve with regard to unregistered design rights between the original equipment manufacturer who has to put huge sums of money into developing products—even those that are functional—and the spare parts manufacturers. Many of us have both original equipment manufacturers and spare parts manufacturers in our constituencies.

The matter is not simple and it cannot be left on the shelf. The judgment in the other place in the case of British Leyland v. Armstrong shows that some decisions must be made. I asked those who advised me to give me some idea of how design is looked on elsewhere and I understand that copyright protection of purely functional designs is much rarer in other countries. It may be obtained for 25 years in Japan and for 16 years in New Zealand. Many of the old Commonwealth countries which have previously granted life plus 50-year protection for purely functional objects are changing their copyright laws as we have had to do so, in the light of the key decision in British Leyland v. Armstrong. In France, a registrable design can be protected by copyright.

Quite how we achieve the right decisions on this balance, I am not sure. We have to look not only at our own situation but at the fact that the European Economic Community is seen as the leader in intellectual property matters. Therefore, whatever we do in the Bill will no doubt result in repercussions, and perhaps people following our example. The European Commission must be looking carefully at what we are doing. In achieving a balance we have not only our own legislation to bear in mind but our commitment to 1992 and our example to countries in Europe, and throughout the Commonwealth. Therefore, it will be a most difficult matter.

I have corresponded with my hon. Friend the Minister on this matter of whether "must match" and "must fit" will be fair to both sides of the equation, and I wish to press him further on it. I understand that the decision was made in the light of increasing competition. I have received figures from Ford showing that body panels and wings of cars are largely imported. The figure is about 80 or 90 per cent. If we reduce the amount of protection, do we not increase the amount of import penetration and, in the name of competition, encourage those people from abroad?

This may all be part of 1992 and the single market, but we need to look carefully at it, and I would be grateful for my hon. Friend's comments on how we can see the "must match," and "must fit" proposals creating more incentives for UK manufacturers to compete with European manufacturers, so that body panels are produced here. I have some sympathy with the motor industry's argument that its members would like to see this idea dropped, but I also have sympathy with the desire for further competition. While there is a case to be made for this, although that is not accepted by the car industry—the original equipment manufacturers—it may be seen as a blunt instrument in the way in which it applies, for example, to computer hardware. It worries me that, if the normal three parts of any word processor can fit, presumably there would be no unregistered design right for a part of a word processor or whatever part of the three bits that usually go together, for people such as IBM and other computer manufacturers. If I have misunderstood this, I would be grateful to be reassured, but if those parts fit or match, unless they are a registered design, there will be no protection. If the argument is that the manufacturer of such products should register all his designs, I can understand that, but to register every part of a motor car would be an enormously lengthy and time-consuming process, and while it might be possible for large manufacturers, what about small manufacturers?

I am not rejecting "must match" and "must fit," but I am exploring—perhaps it would be better done in Committee, in view of the need for brevity—whether there are any other ways out of this problem. For example, there is the change of the licence of rights to a compulsory licence. I understand that the European Commission is looking carefully at the possibility of compulsory licences, which would need the establishment of a tribunal system. This involves another part of the Bill and an extension of its powers to compulsory licences. If a manufacturer who wished to enter the market could not get a licence under this compulsory licence procedure, he could, if the manufacturer of the original products complained, go to the tribunal for judgment.

I understand and appreciate the importance of avoiding monopolies, but there is a likelihood, if we do not tackle the European dimension, that this matter will be referred to the European Court, and I would appreciate my hon. Friend's comments.

I am also concerned about the functional designs and the enjoyment of copyright for the designer's life plus 50 years. As time is now fleeing, I will press my hon. Friend

[Mr. Iain Mills]

the Minister on this matter in Committee. There is some concern about the judgment of aesthetic designs and how eye appeal, not artistic merit, would effectively be the criterion, and the 15-year provision. I have been pressed about the design right of five years complete and a further five years under licence, leading to 10 years' protection for registered designs, and the suggestion that this should be extended to 10, 15 or 20 years, again with the possibility of a compulsory licence. These are important matters.

I understand the difficulties of my hon. Friend the Minister as, among the many briefs I am clutching, I note that the Confederation of British Industry is strong in its resolution to the matter, that the British Automotive Parts Promotion Council takes rather a different view and that the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders does not seem to have found common ground among its members, and is unable to advise them. I fully appreciate the difficulties of Ministers and Back Benchers in coming to hard conclusions as to the best solution. A balance, which has been mentioned today, is obviously important.

There are a number of other aspects. I am concerned —I know that this matter was taken up in the other place —about Crown powers. The Crown has been given new and extensive rights, and the defence industry is most concerned about this matter. I wonder whether these new sweeping powers are necessary and I hope that the Government will be sympathetic to an amendment on this. The five-year licence provision sufficiently protects the Crown and I am not sure about the urgent need provision suggested by Lord Beaverbrook. I would be grateful for my hon. Friend's comments on this matter, but perhaps it would be better to take this up in more detail in Committee.

I was interested in my hon. Friend's comments about the number of proposals in the Bill which affect trade mark agents, and I welcome the inclusion of privilege in the matter of trade mark agents dealing with clients. This is an important matter for them. They will also be subject, as I understand from the Bill, to becoming registered on a registry of trade mark agents. This is obviously a great advance, which I welcome. Although it may not be possible for him to comment tonight, I press my hon. Friend on how this registry would be formed. I understand from correspondence that this may not be possible now, and that it could be introduced subsequently. I have talked to a wide range of eminent trade mark agents and they are concerned that their profession achieves the highest quality of education, performance and standards. I am concerned that the way in which the registry operates allows this to happen.

I congratulate the Institute of Trade Mark Agents on its new proposals for education and qualifications, but wonder whether it would not be appropriate to have an intermediate body which may set down the basic criteria for the way in which the registry operates, such as the senatorial version of its standing advisory committee. I know that it is planning to broaden that, but I wonder whether some intermediate body might be suitable. While I am in favour of self-regulation, there are occasions when the rules should, perhaps, be set by another body. By and large, I wholeheartedly welcome the establishment of a registry for trade mark agents and all agents also welcome that, provided we can achieve the best and highest degree of qualification.

I should now like to turn to some technical points. I understand that the appropriate section extends privilege to a registered patent agent in respect of

"any matter relating to patents, trade marks, service marks, registered designs or design right, or with respect to any question of copyright connected with any such matters;"

It does not appears to cover the question of passing off confidentiality. It may well be that the matter was covered in another place, but I should appreciate the Minister's comments, though not necessarily tonight. The corresponding provision for registered trade mark agents in the appropriate section appears to cover

"any matter relating to trade marks or service marks".

It makes no mention of copyright design passing off in the same way. Part VII, which deals with the fraudulent application or use of a registered trade mark, makes no reference to service marks. If I am incorrect about that or if it has been corrected in another place, perhaps the Minister will tell the House now or at a later stage.

The appointment of county courts or patent county courts in the appropriate section which refers to related patents and designs or other intellectually related matters presumably includes trade marks and service marks. The other section provides for the inclusion of registered patent agents who may address a patent county court. Will registered trade mark agents have those same powers? I would appreciate the Minister's advice on that matter.

I have been in correspondence with the Minister about character merchandising and, as always, I appreciated his forthright and frank comments. The Standing Advisory Committee is taking a long-range view of trade mark matters. I would welcome the Minister's advice because character merchandising may well be taken up later in another Bill. I am especially concerned about the problems of trafficking, but perhaps the Bill is not the appropriate measure to deal with that. We must get this matter right, and many suggestions have been made about it. Unless we can deal adequately with trafficking there may be even more problems.

I was interested recently to be briefed by the Institution of Electrical Engineers when I found that this extraordinary and exciting Bill presents problems for it, too. I originally trained as a chemical engineer and have some sympathy for electrical engineers. The institution showed me its database and abstracts from it. I understand that under the original terms of the Bill that will be illegal. The institution was helpful in its briefing and the Government may well be sympathetic to an amendment that will help the institution to give to the scientific community quite remarkable access to abstracts from learned articles. I cannot remember how many learned articles are covered, but they are of enormous value and are used by the European Parliament, by hon. Members and by the scientific community.

The institute is anxious about the matter, and I have assured it that there will be many amendments coming from the other place and that the Minister's officials are working extremely hard. Any advice on timing would be helpful, and perhaps the Minister would be prepared to see members of the institution. I do not act on its behalf, but as an engineer I find its concern quite important.

I am a vice-president of the Institute of Trading Standards Administration and I am concerned about

enforcement by trading standards officers. They are quite justified in bringing to me the problem that they are finding in using the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 against persons dealing in illicit audio recordings or foreign video recordings. This is often because of the clever marketing techniques used by people who deal in those things.

Trading standards officers have found that their efforts to use the Act are frequently thwarted because the illicit packer, in copying the packaging of the legitimate article, omits all mention of the genuine producer and sometimes even substitutes the name and logo of an entirely fictitious company. Similar problems exist with Asian language video recordings and computer software. I should be grateful for the Minister's advice about what to do to strengthen the enforcement powers of trading standards officers.

I have long campaigned against industrial counterfeiting and I enormously appreciate the inclusion in the Bill of the clause that makes counterfeiting a criminal offence. I congratulate my hon. Friend and his colleagues because it is right that this pernicious practice should be made a criminal offence. The clause will be widely welcomed, not just by hon. Members, but by British industry because it is likely to provide a significant and obvious deterrent to this kind of crime. Arguments that the Trade Marks Act 1938 provides criminal penalties have been belied by the fact that on average the courts have imposed penalties of about £200 per crime. To a counterfeiter making many hundreds of thousands of pounds from counterfeiting our famous British brand names and products, that is derisory and not a deterrent.

I congratulate the Government and give notice that while fully supporting the Bill I feel that on some points we can improve even further their excellent efforts. If I am lucky enough to be on the Standing Committee and to catch the Chairman's eye, I shall suggest amendments that will confer on the police power to apply to a magistrate for a search warrant, and shall seek to amend the provision about the forfeiture of counterfeit goods or material so that it no longer depends on a person being convicted. I shall suggest amendments to change the offence of possession in order to make it unnecessary to prove that the possessor himself intended to commit a further offence. I shall try to insert a power that will enable enforcement authorities to share information, first with each other and secondly with industry. That is most important. I shall also try to strengthen Customs procedures about the importation of counterfeit goods.

I seem to be congratulating the Government quite often and I do so again on the European measure about which they are taking a lead on the control of counterfeit goods coming into Britain. I look forward to discussing in more detail with the Minister in Committee the reasons behind my proposed amendments to the excellent clause about counterfeiting.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): I have not had an opportunity to study the Bill as carefully as my hon. Friend. Does the counterfeiting power extend to intellectual property as well as to physical property?

Mr. Mills: I can tell my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) that, as I understand it, it would. If it is a deliberate counterfeit and not a design right it would come under that clause.

I could be tempted to continue for hours about the Community Trade Marks Office but I know that I should not be called again. I had the honour to chair the Committee which dealt with this and I can tell the House that the matter is still very much in the air. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) on his redoubtable and splendid support when he was Minister of State for the campaign to site the proposed Community Trade Marks Office in London. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) and my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) on their efforts. We have all campaigned, but we are up against tough opposition from The Hague, Munich and now Madrid. It is only right that Britain, which does not have a visible and tangible demonstration of its commitment to the European Community, should have this important institution. We have Culham, which is not an institution but a research project. Despite being the second biggest contributor to the European Community, we do not have evidence of our strong commitment to Europe, not just in the past but in 1992.

The time has come for Europe to recognise the justice of our case and to give us that important institution, which will directly lead to at least 200 jobs, and may indirectly lead to 10 or 20 times that number. With the help of the developers, Taylor Woodrow, Her Majesty's Government are building that office. It is in St. Katharine's dock, near the Tower of London. My colleagues should look at it. That is how tangible the commitment is. The Government have offered substantial support. I press them to declare how substantial it is and to increase the substance, if that is needed. The Government must understand that they may have to play this as the European bargaining takes place. I ask my hon. Friend to ensure that the Government's intellectual backing and commitment are followed up by funds and arguments to ensure that justice is done and Britain has that European institution.

6.40 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Had the debate been televised, it would have been a switch-off. However, the debate is more interesting for the long-term prospects of the country than are some of the packed, highly controversial debates on what I sometimes think are non-issues. Therefore, it is pleasant and refreshing to stand here this evening, in the peace and quiet of the Chamber —it was peaceful until the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) arrived—and debate some matters of interest to the nation and do less politicking.

I warn hon. Members who have the misfortune to sit on the Committee that examines the Bill. I was a member of the Committee that examined the last patents Bill, the Patents, Designs and Marks Bill, that came from the House of Lords. Hon. Members will find it a dreadful, complex experience. Often, after sitting from 10.30 in the morning to 1 o'clock in the afternoon, they will come out of the Committee Room with sore heads. The last patent Bill was recognised as a stop-gap measure. I well remember having a conversation with a noble Lord who has gained fame in the legal profession for his knowledge of the Patent Acts. He said, "You may be an engineer , Mr. Member for Wallsend, but you know nothing about complexity and technology until you get into patent legislation."

[Mr. Ted Garrett]

We are now in a more difficult situation. We have extended way beyond patents into other aspects of design, technology and science. Nevertheless, I welcome the Bill. Surprisingly, for a debate of this calibre, there are some hon. Members with a good knowledge of science, technology, and chemical engineering who can add something in Committee. Hon. Members on the Committee will also learn something about their fellow hon. Members. I have never seen such unity between spokesmen on both sides of the House.

I was impressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), whose intellect I admire; it is far superior to mine. But I like classical music and he likes pop music. He mentioned that one in four pop music compositions is exported from this country. I thought of all the misery that had been inflicted upon so many people and of the long-term damage to their ears. That is well worth remembering.

I have always held the view that the design ability, inventiveness and ingenuity of the people of this country have never been fully rewarded. The man who invented "cats' eyes"—some hon. Members are too young to remember; it was in the 1930s—received adequate reward. I have often considered that Frank Whittle, who designed the jet engine, never received his full reward. Many of us may cite examples of men and women who, applying their minds and logic, have come up with some brilliant thoughts. For example, I refer to marine engineering. Some of our designers in the north-east helped to design the bulbous nose on many ships in use today. That design was stolen from us by the Japanese, and we never received our full reward.

People have improved the quality of many of our textiles. Hon. Members will have seen textiles that have been churned out in the far east, inscribed, "Finest English worsted. Made in Huddersfield." Again, our designs and colours have been stolen. We have British watches of standing and substance. They are much more expensive than I can afford. Cheap imitations are flooding in from many areas. Fake designs audaciously bear quality trade marks.

We must get around to protecting not merely designs and names but the rewards for the people who have singlemindedly put so much of their lives into such designs. Without them, British industry, technology and inventiveness will not progress. These days, we hear a lot about the decline in British industry. British industry is beginning to surge forward. New people are going into British industry. We must encourage them, but we must also encourage those who put in the effort to get the just reward. It is a sad reflection on our society that so many people who have put in the effort have not been rewarded. The reason is that they have not had sufficient money to take a case through the courts.

A long time ago, before I became an hon. Member, I was lucky enough to work for enlightened employers. Some of my contemporaries were design-conscious and inventive. They got assistance from their employers to register patents. That is an expensive procedure. It becomes more expensive when some principles of a patent are deliberately stolen. It is at that stage that the legal profession comes into the matter.

The Minister said that he would like the Patent Office to be kept in London. I for one would not. I should like the Patent Office to be where our design and industrial bases are. I would plump for the north-east, but I suspect that the Patent Office will remain in London. That is where patent lawyers live and congregate. That is where, with high moral standards, they argue with each other in the courts. Often they argue that costs are astronomical. Those hon. Members who will be on the Committee should also look at that aspect of the legislation.

The Government produced a Green Paper and a White Paper, but such documents are produced for discussion. All Governments have the right to decide what their analysis is, what should be rejected from a Green Paper and what should be added to the Bill, and the Government have done that.

I support them on the question of blank tape because of the sheer bureaucracy that would be involved in getting the ultimate levy. It will be bad enough collecting the poll tax without trying to get money on blank tape.

Those are my random thoughts. I hope that in Committee we shall have some really serious debates. We will have to sharpen our minds to get this legislation through with every loophole closed. I am old enough to know that we shall not close all the loopholes, but when the Bill comes out of Committee we shall certainly have improved the lot of the people who will ultimately benefit from it.

6.50 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I wish to echo the comment made by the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) that it is certainly a pleasure to take part in a debate that is less ritualistic than most and deals with the issues before us in the Bill. He referred in his speech to lawyers, and this Bill has been described as a lawyers' paradise. It is with some hesitation that I declare my interest as a partner in a law firm that has quite a number of clients who are involved in publishing authors' creative work and dealing with intellectual property. I hope that the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) will have some sympathy with the suspicion that one has an intense sense of anticipation that this Bill may reach the statute book in as complicated and convoluted form as possible, and the even worse suspicion that the sole purpose of my speech is to complicate it still further.

Those interested in this area of the law have been greatly reassured by the very name of the Bill and the way in which it has been introduced, although there are, of course, concerns, and I will touch on those in a moment. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) implicitly indicated the degree of courage that is required to bring forward a Bill of this kind, bearing in mind the tremendously conflicting interests. It is a great credit to the Government that they have introduced it.

The Bill started its life in another place as a relatively straightforward and clearly drafted piece of legislation, but has already, as indicated by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, become something of a monster. In my view, it still has some way to go towards achieving its objectives of improving the lot of those responsible for creating the works of the mind on which our society depends while ensuring that there is access to those works

on fair terms. I hope that during the Bill's passage through the House we may be able to do something to restore the balance which in some areas seems to have been lost.

I shall direct my remarks predominantly to the copyright elements of the Bill. We have had excellent speeches by my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir. G. Pattie) on the design aspects.

The Government have told us, and history shows, that there is a major new copyright Bill only once in a generation, so the Bill is important if only for that reason. But it has a much greater importance. Copyright is the trading system for works of the mind, for the information and creative products which play so vital a part in our society and our economy today. In terms of demand, four years ago a Cabinet Office paper estimated the value of those industries at some £15 billion a year. The hon. Member for Dagenham quoted a figure of £20 billion, which is something over one twentieth of our total economy. Those industries include, in addition to the traditional writing, publishing and printing industries, broadcasting in all its new forms, the film, video and audio industries, computer services and those involved in the distribution of information products.

These industries are large, significant and influential for the shape and growth of our society. They represent an area of trade in which the United Kingdom, with the benefits of the English language, has a particular role to play. They enjoy exceptional growth possibilities, and various speakers have referred to that. As a country, our writing, research, publishing, television, films and software are of unrivalled quality. We stand on the threshold of an information explosion generated by the information technology revolution. This offers this country unusal opportunities, which the industries are now seizing. What is more, as has been said by various hon. Members, the copyright model that we set in this Bill is very likely to be followed by countless other countries which have taken their lead from us already in such matters as well as in other areas of legislation.

The Bill, on its publication in the other place, appeared to recognise that an effective trading system for information products and services is clearly essential. In the United Kingdom we secured this long ago by establishing a property right, a right to sell or license. The existence of this right works in the interests of the public by encouraging authors and other creators to put their works on the market by giving them the prospect of fair earnings. But, because the property is incorporeal, unlike land or chattels, it is particularly difficult to enforce. That problem was touched on by my right hon. and learned Friend in his opening speech. At any time it has been easy to make pirate copies of books, films, records and software. As a consequence, the Copyright Acts have imposed both civil remedies and criminal penalties to discourage such behaviour. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton pointed out how new information technology has greatly increased that risk, not just from commercial fly-by-nighters but by all sorts of respectable people: by the ordinary citizen with a cassette recorder, by industrial companies—which, one has to say, at the same time will go to the ends of the earth to protect their own intellectual property—by libraries, by professional people, by Governments and by local government.

These new technologies, of course, help provide access to information. They enable users of information to make a copy—perhaps many copies—cheaply and easily of just the piece of information they need. This confers major benefits on consumers, the benefits of cheapness and selection. Since, normally, they own the master copy, they are, they think, doing only what is within their rights. But for the copyright owner these acts are legion. The copy seems to amount to little, but the sum of the copies is enormous and for many types of work this prevents the owner from getting the fair return to which he or she is entitled. It discourages investment of his or her time and skill in the creation of further work and it discourages investment in those works by publishers. In volume, it destroys the viability of industries dependent upon the copyright.

It was this phenomenon that the Whitford departmental inquiry was set up to investigate and advise on. It produced a widely accepted report to the effect that copyright owners would have to accept new and perhaps less satisfactory systems for controlling and producing returns from these new uses. It also advocated that users should accept that, while such systems should as far as possible be voluntary, they should be backed by statutory enforcement.

Those recommendations were accepted by the Government in a series of Green Papers and White Papers, and appeared for the most part in the original text of this Bill. But in the course of proceedings in another place many of them and many of the positive supports for the copyright owners have been dropped. I will not repeat the elements touched on by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton in that regard. He referred to the need to secure reward for composers and manufacturers of music records so frequently copied in the home, and to his stance on the levy on blank tape. I could not contemplate going that far, but I must say to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary that I still feel some pricks of conscience that we have yet to cover this point and should be happy to contribute to any attempt that he might make to cover it.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does my hon. Friend recognise the great danger that, if we set up such a bureaucracy to distribute money from a comparatively modest levy on blank tapes, much would go on administration and little to those who composed or performed the works? Would that not have a similarity to the performing rights system, where a high proportion of the money paid to the Performing Right Society does not go to the composer or artist, but is spent on administration?

Mr. Neale: There is undoubtedly a danger in any system of this type. I agree with the hon. Member for Dagenham that if one is to criticise the Government on their stance it is only right and proper to come forward with a clear alternative, which I am unable to do. I am left with a feeling of conscience, which I think my hon. Friend the Minister, as a composer, would share and I wish him well in that interest. I am sure he will accept that it is clearly unfair on people who spend considerable time and effort producing creative works to see them copied freely, without any attempt to contain that.

There is a fundamental need to secure a reward for writers and publishers for the books and periodicals which are so freely copied by libraries and, similarly, those copied by commercial companies and research institutions

[Mr. Neale]

through the block licensing systems. Yet that has been truncated in the Bill, so that if it were enacted it would amount to an unfair freedom for important sections of the market to make copies to meet their needs. For valuable and scientific publications the result would be devastating, given the expense of production and the small circulation. Under clause 29 academic institutions, libraries and commercial research organisations will be able to obtain copies of articles, journals and even parts of books. They are all worthy institutions but, as Whitford said, there is no reason for permitting the confiscation of originators' property, especially since relatively simple licensing systems are available to provide the required access.

My right hon. and learned Friend reiterated his belief that people should be rewarded when they create a work and my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden referred to the comments of Lord Beaverbrook and the Secretary of State in another place. It was the CBI and library bodies that objected to the administration involved. If comparatively little is going on, the amount of administration should be small. If the administration costs are heavy, it shows, as does research, that there is an enormous amount of infringement of originators' rights. We need to consider that carefully.

The legal presumptions are designed to ease and reduce the cost of the copyright plaintiff's burden of proof in enforcement actions. It is worrying that the Government dropped those without adequate replacement, and I hope that that will be considered. As a result this Bill carries the danger of becoming an infringers' charter. New technologies present, not so much an opportunity for the copyright owner, but a major threat, destroying the viability of an original publishing operation, particularly of the valuable specialised works which are most likely to be accessed by these means. Book publishers, for example, greatly hit by these changes in policy, have given the Government a shortlist of priorities which include better protection of computer software. The Bill improves on that, but there are certain disturbing drafting loopholes. They include support for the block licensing of photocopying by institutions and companies—that is truncated in the Bill as it stands; support in the fight against international piracy of books and other copyright products; and the special circumstances of British publishing in the European market, which is by no means a common publishing market because of the different marketing considerations that inevitably apply.

In that connection, in 1981 the book publishing industry asked the Government for help with serious problems which the single market presented for British publishing. The threat came from opening the doors to competing American products, without any compensating entry into the United States. I hope that it is appreciated that, far from helping, clause 29 advertises the opportunity.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department to continue to listen carefully to the amendments that are being advocated. I am sure that the spirit of the debate will be carried over into the Committee. There seems to be a genuine desire to create a better environment in this respect. These points need to be remedied so that Parliament helps, and does not penalise, our creative industries which are so vital, not just to our culture, but to our economy. They are important to the extent that many hundreds of millions of pounds a year are involved.

In conclusion, I wish to take up a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton. Given the history of infrequent introductions of Copyright Bills and the rapid change in technology, we need both a more permanent form of machinery to keep this under review, and help in ensuring that our law keeps abreast of technical changes. I know that so far the Government have resisted the idea of a standing national council to assist in this process. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister realises that that idea is supported by the Confederation of Information Communication Industries. He has resisted it to date, but I hope that he will reconsider it because there is considerable anxiety regarding the pace of change and the ability to get round elements of the Bill.

I welcome the general thrust of the Bill and I applaud my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry for introducing it. One accepts that there are desperately conflicting pressures. There is not a great deal of party political division over the subject, but there is commercial division and it would have been extremely tempting for the Government to leave it for yet another year. I wish the Bill well and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister notes the points raised in the debate.

7.7 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): This is not a controversial Bill; nobody will vote against it, and that would be the case whenever it was presented. Therefore, it is a disgraceful reflection on the British legislative system that we have had to wait 11 years since the publication of the Whitford report for legislation. It is the fault of Administrations of both parties. For a short time I was a Minister after the Whitford report was published. We must find a better way of legislating more quickly on matters on which there is no great disagreement on principle. If it takes 11 years to put into effect relatively uncontroversial but important legislation such as this, there seems little hope of reaching a common single European market by 1992.

The purpose of the legislation must be to ensure that the creator of intellectual property is properly rewarded for his effort, which ranges from a symphony to the composition of a computer software system. Those who spend time on the creation of a computer software system may spend more time on it than Mozart did on a symphony, and that effort must be properly rewarded. It is wrong that the results of a great deal of effort should be stolen so easily.

I hope that in future we shall be able to legislate more quickly on these matters, perhaps concentrating on matters of principle and rights. Enforcement and administrative matters might well be developed later. Of course, I welcome the Bill.

I shall deal briefly with three matters. First, I have had letters from several universities about the copyright in statutes and the statutory instruments passed by Parliament, and in law reports. Several people have written to me saying that it is wrong for them to be denied the opportunity to present for a court or tribunal legislation that has been passed by the House or, indeed, law reports that require the interpretation of legislation. I hope that the Minister will look at that problem. I am sure that other people have written to him about it. It is an important matter of principle that the law should be

accessible to all and that poor litigants, especially those who litigate themselves and who need to copy and take extracts from law reports, should be readily afforded the opportunity to do so without breaching copyright laws.

Secondly, moral right exists in many European countries. The Bill extends it to creative matters such as films. Sometimes when I go to the films I think that there is so much moral rights recorded in the film that the credit titles will be longer than the film. Sometimes the film has been going for 10 minutes before the moral rights are put up on the screen and the story resumes.

I think that the concept of moral right is correct, but we ought to be consistent about it. It will apply to writers of advertisement copy and producers of film, but it is not to extend to journalism. Indeed, when one considers some journalism in *The Sun* or the *Evening Standard*, perhaps moral right ought to be compulsory. When someone writes headlines such as "Big-boobed bimbo bonked", not only should the author of such a story have the moral right, if that is the right word in that context, to have his name recorded, but it ought to be compulsory so that we know who writes the disreputable smear stories that appear in some of our newspapers. So, if we are to have moral right, let us have it across the board.

There is equally a strong case for someone who produces, say, excellent photographs or sketches for newspapers, or a piece of writing or broadcasting, to have moral right. It should exist consistently across the board.

Thirdly, with regard to a blank tape levy, musicians, composers and performers especially have had their work plagiarised and stolen from time immemorial. Composers such as Donizetti and Rossini used sometimes not to tell the artists or the orchestra the contents of their great arias until the day of a performance. That led them into trouble. I believe that on one occasion a composer, working at the end of the 18th century, presented an aria at the last moment because he was fearful that his work would be reproduced on the streets of Venice without benefit to him. Other prima donnas who had learnt about it at the last moment insisted on another aria being written. I believe that on one occasion either Rossini or Donizetti was forced to sit down at about midday and write another aria to match the ones that had been disclosed at the last possible moment. Therefore, this has always been a problem.

The Government have recognised that. In 1986 they decided that the blank tape levy was a way of dealing with the matter. I am not suggesting that the levy is the only or the perfect way of dealing with the problem of giving artists their correct reward. But if anything has happened since 1986, it must be a reinforcement of the argument that composers and performers ought to be given protection against copying, even if it is only in the home. Since 1986 there has been on the market a flood of double-tape machines. Very few people nowadays buy a hi-fi system unless it has a back-to-back taping system. Such systems are widely advertised, and their sale has greatly increased in the past two or three years. That reinforces the argument for protecting artists whose work can be copied so easily.

The growth in the market of compact disc players means that one can buy a very high quality recording which will not deteriorate over time and can copy it over and over again. The copy does not have the hiss and scratch that one gets from an ordinary gramophone recording. That again reinforces the argument for protecting the performer.

Indeed, everything that has happened in that time will reinforce the need to protect the artist and to present him with some reward. Of course, in the past, some people have achieved extraordinary rewards. I think that it was Puccini who earned more from Al Jolson than he did from many of his scores. Al Jolson's publisher took a piece from Tosca and turned it into a song called "I found my love in Avalon". Puccini sued Al Jolson's publisher and was awarded the entire royalties. I think that it produced a rather larger income for him than many of his famous operatic scores. I want to see artists and performers, whether of classical or pop music, getting their just rewards, as Puccini did from Al Jolson's productions. Something like a blank tape levy is the only way to do it.

I know that there are problems about administration. As a solution, I suggest that the Government ought to put into the Bill a framework based on a levy on tapes. It would not be as difficult to administer as the Government suggest. After all, there are few manufacturers of tapes and it would not be too difficult to catch and control those who import tapes. So one can define the market fairly easily. There are turnover records and the manufacturers can be identified separately in VAT returns. There is no great difficulty in identifying the market. The Government ought to tack on to the Bill a framework for doing this, but say that they will allow for an interval of time during which the industry could try to work out a voluntary arrangement.

Such systems operate elsewhere, for example, for the advertising industry. The control of advertisements works extremely well with the Advertising Standards Authority. The authority works voluntarily without any public expenditure involved. It does its job excellently. A system of self-regulation will be imported when we implement the European directive on advertising.

In exactly the same way, there could be a voluntary arrangement in this case. It all came about because the advertising industry was told that if it did not regulate itself there would be statutory intervention. If the Government put a framework into the Bill that they could implement in future, after perhaps three or even 10 years, so that they could transfer some of those rewards from the copiers of music, in particular, to its producers it would be possible for the tape producers to set about organising a voluntary scheme. It would involve no public expenditure or great bureaucracy and would transfer rewards from those who enjoy music and other productions to those who produce them.

I do not think it is an argument against this approach that performers such as Madonna or The Beatles earn a lot of money. They will earn a lot of money from their record productions in any case. But it tends to be artists who do not have large incomes who will suffer as a result of copying. I hope that the Government will adopt that compromise.

The Bill is uncontroversial. I am not asking for a U-turn, but I do ask the Government for what I believe the pop industry describes as a re-mix.

7.18 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Some hon. Members—I count myself among them,—may be

[Mr. Andrew Hunter]

experiencing a political version of déjà vu, having covered in previous debates at least part of the material that we are covering today.

Three years ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) successfully introduced what was to become the Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Act 1985. I welcomed the opportunity to take part in that debate, just as I welcome this opportunity.

The town of Basingstoke, which dominates my constituency, has become over the years one of the major centres in the United Kingdom for the hi-tech industry. Constituency interests in intellectual property, and the Bill, are appreciable.

I echo the sentiments already expressed that it is good to take part in a debate where clearly there is no party political divide, especially after the uproar earlier this afternoon. I listened with great care and interest to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and I substantially agree with what he said.

I do not for one moment challenge the need for the introduction of major legislation of this sort. On the contrary, I add my voice to those who demand such legislation. I fully accept the proposition that copyright law must be made more logical and consistent and that it must be brought up to date to take into account modern developments in communication technology.

As a former schoolmaster, I particularly welcome the suggestion that schools and other education establishments should be allowed to record broadcast material for teaching purposes. As has been said in the debate, it is essential to introduce new and effective measures for dealing with copyright theft, counterfeiting and so on.

I particularly welcome the Government's acknowledgement of the importance of getting the balance right between the interests of the innovator or designer and the interests of fair competition, with the benefits that that will bring to the consumer. The essential and fundamental question is whether that balance is right and whether the Bill has found the balance. I propose to restrict my comments exclusively to the design side of the Bill. Initially, I must confess that I have my doubts about whether the balance is right.

My attention was particularly caught by a choice of words by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister who spoke of the need to legislate to provide limited protection for the designer and innovator. I felt that the context in which he used those words demanded not the term "limited" but "adequate". At several key points in the Bill the interests of the innovator and designer may not be sufficiently safeguarded—lost, as it were, to the interests of the consumer and fair competition.

The Bill carries with it the abolition of design copyright. It replaces it with two forms of protection, each of which is accompanied by major exemptions, which have the objective of allowing spare part copying, to which much reference has been made. Under part IV, the option of registered design is limited only to aesthetic design. Arguably, that is a weakness, although I acknowledge that the period of protection is sufficiently extended.

Similarly, under part III, an automatic design right is created for functional, non-aesthetic designs and non-registered aesthetic designs, but the period of protection is only five years. In the following five years the innovator or designer is obliged to allow rivals to compete and thereafter no protection is given.

The spare parts debate dominated much of the proceedings in another place. During those deliberations, most attention was given to the motor vehicle industry. I do not for one moment doubt the importance of that industry or the specific problems generated in it, but, arguably, their Lordships' debate was the poorer for its great concentration on the industry. Arguably, the proposals in the Bill are couched in terms which, to an excessive extent, reflect the interests of the motor vehicle industry. As a result, arguably, protection has been completely removed from a wide range of design products in other industries. The impact on the rest of industry could be dramatic and highly undesirable.

Without for one moment denying the need for the legislation, and while warmly welcoming it, I believe that there is no doubt that there is a growing and articulate body of thought that is concerned about the proposals on designs. The essential argument is that the Bill will, in practice, substantially weaken the incentives for British companies to innovate. My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) made much of that and I entirely endorse his comments.

More specifically, it can be argued that British companies will be at a disadvantage compared with overseas competitors since so many of the latter enjoy far greater protection. I understand that functional design is protected for 50 years in France and for 25 years in Japan and that there is limitless protection in Portugal. Without protection, the incentive to innovate is seriously undermined. The Standing Committee will have to address that problem seriously.

An area for concern is the suggestion that the introduction of registered design will impose major new burdens on business. The Government's overall objective is to decrease the burdens on industry. It is a fact that tens or even hundreds of development designs are produced for every product that is eventually marketed. Very probably during that process the designer will wish to protect those development designs as well as his final product. If that is so, the Bill will impose on the designer a process of registration that will be costly and time-consuming and might prove to be bureaucratically burdensome. The impact may be felt most by small businesses, that very sector of our national and economic life which the Government so rightly wish to nurture.

A second area for concern, which must be considered carefully, is the argument that functional design deserves greater recognition than is currently given in the Bill. To start with, and almost in parentheses, I confess that I am confused and somewhat cynical about the rigid distinction between aesthetic and functional design. I wonder whether, in practice, that rigid distinction can be made. However, accepting for a moment that such a distinction can be drawn, I must ask why the Bill gives such a low priority to protecting functional design.

The Bill would have us believe that artistic endeavour and aesthetic design are more worthy of protection than functional design. Why should industrial innovation and functional excellence be regarded as less worthy of protection? Surely functional excellence, ease of assembly and economic use of material are as much of good design as aesthetic qualities, yet in the Bill functional excellence

receives the protection only of design right rather than of registered design. The Bill almost presents functional design as a second-class citizen.

The protection of five years given by the Bill is insufficient to encourage innovation to the extent that we should like. It is insufficient to allow British industry to compete on an equal footing with overseas competitors.

A third area for concern in the Bill is the "must fit, must match" principle. Surely it contains loopholes and inconsistencies. The Bill excludes from all protection many products that cannot be regarded just as spare parts. Intentionally or unintentionally, it will be possible for a host of composite unit products—hi-fi, kitchen units, food processors and so on—to be copied freely. Surely that cannot be right. Nor can it be the intention of the Bill. For such items, there will be no protection, which is unacceptable—hence so much of the concern that is being expressed about the design part of the Bill.

Similarly, the "must match" principle, intentionally or unintentionally, encompasses a wide range of items, including product casing formed from two or more pieces. In other words, the design casing of a huge range of products will lose protection. The important point is that many firms have developed products that are novel primarily in appearance or in the interconnections. Protection will be removed from those.

Let me expand on the point that I tried to draw from the hon. Member for Dagenham in an intervention. As we know, the Bill removes design copyright. It can be argued that it has not replaced it with adequate protection for innovators. Despite the hours of consideration given to the Bill in another place and the conclusions reached there, it may still be argued that design copyright should not be eliminated. However, if it is to be eliminated, functional design must be protected for a greater length of time.

I accept—indeed I warmly welcome—the Bill and I welcome the opportunity for this debate. The key to the problem is to get the balance of conflicting interests right, and I have my doubts that that balance has been achieved for the design aspects.

7.30 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): This interesting debate has so far covered everything from the defence industry to Madonna and doubtless a few variations are yet to come. I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), who made interesting points about design, if I restrict myself to one or two specific aspects of the Bill. The only interests that I have to declare are as a member of the National Union of Journalists and as someone who occasionally tapes music. Let me say immediately that I would have no objection to paying a little to those who have created that music.

Let me deal with the aspects of the Bill affecting journalism. It is important that what is, by common consent, a necessary and valuable Bill should not have a marginal impact upon groups of people whom there is no intention to hurt. While the major industrial concerns are being discussed, some such effects could slip through almost unnoticed. I am especially concerned about clause 11, which replaces clause 4 of the 1956 Act. Under that Act a journalist who wrote a piece of work had to accept—perhaps sometimes reluctantly—that the proprietor of the publication was entitled to the copyright in that work so far as it related to its appearance in any newspaper, magazine or other periodical. In all other respects, the copyright was retained by the author. Thus a newspaper or magazine could syndicate staff journalists' work in other newspapers or magazines, but if the work was broadcast, included in a book or fed into a database, the author held the copyright and was entitled to recompense for its use. When the Bill entered the Lords, that was roughly the position.

However, quite a dramatic change was made in the Lords. I had hoped that, in amending the Bill, the Lords would have moved towards protecting the rights of journalists, perhaps allowing journalists' employers to use their work in their other publications but limiting it to that. In fact, the other place moved in the opposite direction. The effect of clause 11 as drafted would be that once the journalist has produced a piece of work for his own publication—presumably in return for the salary that that publication pays him—that work belongs to the proprietor, who can do whatever he likes with it. The effect of that is absurd. A relatively low-paid journalist—and they exist—is paid for a piece of work that acquires a value, because of the journalist's reputation or the subject matter or quality of the work, and it is then open season for the proprietor to maximise his revenue by selling that work all over the world and to all branches of the media. That is going too far towards helping the proprietor's interests and diminishing the legitimate rights of journalists. I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House have been known to contribute to the written and broadcast media from time to time and I suspect that they understand the problem. A journalist works for the money that he is paid, but it seems very unfair if that work is then flogged all over the world for large amounts of money, not a penny of which he is entitled to.

If the Bill is unfair to journalists who write, its effects on photographers are far more pernicious. Perhaps I may explain. Article 10(1) of the Berne convention, which governs such matters, states:

> "It shall be permissible in all the countries of the Union to make short quotations from newspaper articles and periodicals, as well as to include them in press summaries".

Most people would say that that was fair enough. In line with article 10(1), the fair dealing provisions of the 1956 Act allowed journalists to make quotations from other sources to clarify a news report, so long as prior permission was obtained. Clause 30 of the Bill, however, removes the distinction between fair dealings with literary work and fair dealing with photographic work.

Clause 30 (1)(b) proposes that the use of material free of charge for the purposes of news reporting should be extended to photographic material. The implication for photographers—particularly freelance photographers—is devastating. One cannot use a bit of a picture in the same way as one can use a quotation from a story or other piece of literature to illustrate a piece or work. One can only use the picture itself. If every Tom, Dick and Harry the world over had the right to use other people's pictures to illustrate his work without paying for them, many photographers would simply lose their livelihood. Everyone knows that freelance photographers are not paid for their work as they do it. The pictures that they take lie in libraries and are used over a period of months and perhaps years. That is what provides the freelance photographer with his income.

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

The journalists' third anxiety about the Bill comes under the heading of moral rights. Essentially, we are discussing whether it should be the right of the publisher or editor to do exactly what he likes with the work that a journalist provides. The original clause 69, which is now clause 73, grants the right to be identified as the author of an article but then makes the right meaningless by stating that the right is not infringed unless it has been asserted in accordance with clause 74. That latter clause requires that the assertion must be in writing. Such a requirement negates the whole purpose of establishing moral rights and the NUJ seeks an amendment to make it easier for copyright holders to assert their moral rights. I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that one has the moral right not to have what one writes manipulated and altered —still appearing under one's name but being used for a purpose quite alien to what was originally intended. We can surely agree that such a right should be incorporated in the Bill.

The National Union of Journalists expresses valid concerns. The union has no political axe to grind but, in the spirit of what has been said about inventors, intellectual property and the right to possession of the intangible, the Bill should defend journalists' rights because they fall into that category. As it stands, the Bill moves too far towards the interests of proprietors and publishers.

As to taping, like other hon. Members, I have had letters from constituents who are confused about it. Some of them, who are musicians, composers and members of the Performing Right Society, cannot understand why the Government have done a remarkable U-turn on home taping. As we have heard already, the 1986 White Paper recognised the extent of the problem and proposed as a solution to legitimise home taping, except for computer programs and videos, and to introduce a 10 per cent. levy on blank audio cassettes, which was to be distributed to copyright owners. That was a commonsense and modest solution. There is statistical evidence that it would have the full support of the vast majority who tape music for their own benefit.

People who take the trouble to tape music, and who have an interest in music almost by definition, respect the musicians, composers, and others who have created the work. People who do home taping are getting something on the cheap but they would not want it to be thought of as stealing the work of others. The modest levy which was proposed would have enabled everyone to have a clear conscience. The product would be cheaper, even with the levy. People would not have to buy the packaging and those who produced the work would get some recompense.

The arguments adduced against the levy have concentrated on other categories of users. The needs of those people could be accommodated in the legislation. I suggest that the arguments we have heard are a subterfuge. It is estimated that 85 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the blank tape for 100 million cassettes imported and sold in the United Kingdom is used to make illegal copies. The Minister should not use an argument which affects only 10 per cent. to destroy the case for a levy on 90 per cent. of blank tapes. A principle is involved. The same principle is recognised in public lending rights and I hope that the Government will accept it in regard to taping.

A great array of people support the taping levy. Sir Michael Tippett and other composers point out that, while £7 million as the total figure which a taping royalty would produce is not much in terms of a Cabinet Minister's salary, it would make all the difference to a composer who is earning less than half the national wage.

Similarly, Sir David Lumsden of the Royal Academy of Music and the heads of other music colleges have expressed concern that there are few enough places for students of music and people involved in the music profession to get their income from and that to deprive them of this money is unreasonable, particularly when it seemed that they would get it.

In a letter a constituent from Kilbirnie says:

"It was understood that this principle of a levy was to be included in the Copyright Bill now going through Parliament as the only effective means by which these royalties could be protected; however, the Government has performed a U-turn on this issue, having dropped the royalty proposal and now we are left with nothing. This legislation would have been a unique opportunity and still could be, to right this grave injustice."

The appropriate words are "still could be". The Government could change their minds again. There will be fine tuning to the legislation and I hope that it will include changes in the Bill as it affects journalists and the music profession and industry.

7.43 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): There has been considerable agreement between the two Front Benches. When that occurs, it behoves Parliament to look at the measure with scepticism. It is with pleasure that I agree that almost everything which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has said, with one qualification. I would not favour a levy on blank tapes, above all because it would hit the blind who rely a great deal on the use of tapes for newsletters and newspapers which sighted people record for them.

I intervene briefly as an author and journalist. I also declare an interest as a trade unionist and as the parliamentary convenor of the Institute of Journalists—wholly unpaid, I hasten to say.

The Bill represents only the second major attempt in the past 75 years to amend the legislation on copyright. No doubt it is intended that, like its predecessors, it should stand the test of time. I very much hope that, suitably amended, it will.

There is much in the Bill which I welcome, but I regret that it is fatally flawed in regard to the interests of journalists, first, in respect of the ownership by journalists of the secondary copyright in the material which they produce, which has traditionally been theirs, and, secondly, in respect of the moral rights being introduced for the first time into British copyright legislation in accordance with the provisions of the Berne copyright convention.

When the Bill was introduced in another place it was acceptable on both counts in regard to protection afforded to journalists, both staff and freelance. Regrettably, Ministers in another place surrendered on these points to the powerful lobby of publishers which is to be found in their Lordships' House. Indeed, there are no more powerful lobbyists than those cloaked in ermine and bedecked with coronets. One must wonder if the time has come for the establishment of a register of Lordships' interests, just as there is a Register of Members' Interests.

In consequence of the amendments that the Government accepted in another place, the Bill has been drastically amended as it affects the rights of journalists and, as the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North rightly mentioned, photographers, in favour of employers and at the expense of staff and freelance journalists and photographers. Journalists will lose the right which has been theirs since the Copyright Act 1911, confirmed by the Copyright Act 1956, to retain secondary rights in their creative work. This is an important point which the Government must address. They must reinstate the provision in Committee. As it stands, the Bill discriminates against the interests of the creators of original work in journalism and photography. In this respect it has become nothing less than a gaffer's Bill.

The second objection that I voice is on moral rights. One has not been able to find much morality in the gutters of Fleet Street of late. None the less, the concept of moral rights has been imported into the legislation in consequence of the Berne convention which goes back to 1886 and of which we, 102 years later, are finally taking note.

The 1986 White Paper on intellectual property and innovation, command 9712, explains:

"amendment of the law will be necessary to comply with the Paris text of the Berne Convention, which requires member states to protect some at least of the moral rights at least until the expiry of copyright."

Nevertheless, though included in the Bill as the required additional safeguards for the creators of copyright works, the provision on moral rights was so extensively modified during the Bill's passage through their Lordships' House, under pressure from the publishers' lobby, that, far from affording the protection which the Berne convention sought to give, it may now remove from many individuals even the right to protest at the infringement of such modest rights as they already possess. That cannot be the Government's intent. As defined in clauses 73, 76 and 78, there are three kinds of moral rights: the right to be identified as the author, the right to object to derogatory treatment of one's work, and the right not to have one's work falsely attributed.

As foreshadowed in the Whitford report and in the 1981 Green Paper, the White Paper contained a proposal to legislate on moral rights:

"(a) authors will be given the right to claim authorship and to object to distortion, but not to modification of a work to which they could not reasonably refuse consent;

(b) these moral rights will be independent of the economic rights, and will be exercisable only by the author. After his death they may be exercised by the person who inherits the copyright or, if the author no longer owns the copyright at his death, by the person to whom he has bequeathed them. An author will be able to waive his moral rights, and such waiver will override any inheritance or bequest; and

(c) moral rights will apply for the duration of the copyright."

As originally introduced the Bill met in large measure the points contained in the White Paper. That is why I am at a loss to understand the way in which Ministers in another place conceded the point before the publishers, who are to be found there in large numbers. There are certainly more publishers there than there are journalists. As a result of financial and other pressures, which could be exerted against an author or a journalist to cause him or her to waive moral rights for all time, the provision now in the Bill for the waiver of those rights is completely against the spirit of the Berne convention. The rights are supposed to be "non-assignable" and "separated from commercial values".

Instead, under the Bill, the waiver

"may relate to . . . works generally . . . existing or future . . . and . . . unconditional".

It is regrettable that the amendments were accepted in another place, and I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends who are dealing with the Bill—particularly as it passes through its Committee stage—to look at those clauses and undertake to table amendments to remove the exceptions that drastically affect the existing rights of journalists, as well as the other rights being brought in under the terms of moral rights. I ask them specifically to look at the rights contained in clauses 11, 75 and 77 and that they further amend clause 85—which permits waivers—to require that the waivers must be specific in relation to time and circumstances.

Further, in the spirit of the Berne convention and the White Paper, it should be made an offence under the Bill to offer a financial inducement or commercial advantage for the waiving or non-assertion of any moral right or to penalise an author who asserts or refuses to waive any such right. I trust that in replying to the debate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs will express his willingness on behalf of the Government to grant justice to journalists in this respect so that they will not be disadvantaged by the Bill, which I am sure was not the Government's intention.

7.54 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Last week my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) asked me to participate in this evening's debate on the basis that it would be one of non-political controversy. Having read in *Hansard* the debates in another place, and heard the interesting and knowledgable contributions in this debate, I agree that, although the presentation of the Bill is an area of non-political controversy, the matter has caused a great deal of controversy, both in terms of the Government's proposals and the amendments which have been tabled, and from my point of view as a Back Bencher. It is interesting, when coming here as a Back Bencher with no axe to grind, to note how, when lobbying hon. Members for this evening's debate, the various interested parties offer contrary advice on, in some instances, the same clauses. Therefore, I wish the Minister and my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench well in trying to square the circle in Committee in regard to these complex and confusing issues.

The issues are critical to much of British industry and the arts, and through them to the nation's creative genius. I understand that the Minister has for some time been trying to break into the area of creative genius in the arts. Because of the unanimity in the House, I wonder whether in his reply he will abandon the political context and sing us his version of "I Did it My Way". *[Laughter.]* Well, hon. Members were rather slow there.

Previous Second Reading debates in which I have taken part have been controversial. The Opposition and the Government were at each other and much of the nitty gritty of the debate was not highlighted. Therefore, from my point of view, this evening's debate has been useful in setting out the agenda for the Committee stage. We must get this legislation right, and the fine tuning which will take place in Committee is necessary to help achieve that aim.

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

I accept that there are such conflicting interests among some of the lobbyists involved that it will be virtually impossible, despite the fine tuning and agreements that take place, for the Bill to be supported unanimously by all sections of British industry and the arts when it comes out of Committee.

I hope to outline some of the briefings that I, and I am sure other hon. Members, have received from a number of sources on some of the important aspects of the legislation. Six major bodies with an interest in the Bill have written to me. They are the Committee of Photographic Copyright, the British Automotive Parts Promotion Council, the Music Copyright Reform Group, the information technology industries, Phonographic Performance Ltd. and the Confederation of British Industry. As I have said, sometimes those various groups oppose each other vehemently and cause confusion.

In my previous life as a local government councillor, I was also a director of the Wigan development company and the Wigan Information Technology company. I was also one of those instrumental in introducing a business centre into Wigan, purchased and run through public resources with private capital. All three of those business interests made a major contribution not just to introducing new industry into our area, but in trying to encourage innovation, in both the public and the private sectors. They used resources to encourage new inventors and people with new ideas not only to set up their operations in Wigan but to assist them in developing their ideas for production capacity and for sales both at home and abroad. Time will tell whether those initiatives will be successful. Paramount to the success of those innovations in British industry is protection for those with new ideas about production capacity in industry and new information technology. It is critical for such developments that protection is provided in this legislation. Members of Parliament must respect the necessity to ensure that British industry is protected.

If this were a defence debate about espionage I suspect that 300 or 400 hon. Members would attend and participate, including the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). Here we are dealing with industrial espionage. I was interested in the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) who spoke about the history of British industry and of how often the ideas of our inventors and our industrial innovations have been stolen and used by foreign competitors to produce materials that were then imported back to the United Kingdom. So it is important that these ideas should be protected from industrial espionage by people, at home or abroad, who seek to secure and use them to their benefit and the detriment of our nation and of those who have used their own mental capacities and financial resources to design new information technology systems and other things that are essential to the British economy and

I welcome the commitment given by both Front Benches to ensuring that British artistic, industrial and technological creativity should be protected. However, I am worried—I seek the Minister's reassurance on this—that unless we get this right, British artists and industry will be put at a grave disadvantage as compared with our overseas competitors. I hope that the Minister will take up these matters positively in Committee.

On 25 April the CBI issued a statement to coincide with this debate. Before I am accused of using a counterfeit I hasten to add that I shall quote from the CBI's brief. It says that

"Britain's designers and inventors need a just reward for their efforts.

The Government's aim in the Bill is to strike a balance between encouraging creativity and the need to ensure competition.

The CBI believes the Bill has got the balance wrong.

The Bill (Part III) introduces a new 'design right', covering designs applied in industry. The new 'design right' will:

—Effectively have a protected term of only 5 years as opposed to copyright (life of author plus 50 years) and registered design (25 years).

—So as to solve difficulties over car 'spares', it will not allow any protection where two new rules apply—'must fit' (Clause 198(3)) and 'must match' (Clauses 198(3) and 248(1)).

The Bill will thus remove protection from the vast majority of design-intensive industries in the UK and leave them less competitive than their rivals abroad."

The CBI went further in its detailed criticism of the Government's attempt merely to strike a balance between competition and the need to encourage investment in new ideas. It says:

"Competition Law should look after anti-competitive procedures. Weakening proper industrial design protection does not do this. It simply weakens the market. It is protection which encourages a strong and vibrant home market. The consumer must have a choice. But this implies not just on costs but by having a range of competitive alternative products. There would not be the present diversity of consumer products without intellectual property right protection.

Education provides an example. Because it has been almost impossible to police intellectual property rights in educational software products, almost no good educational software is now being produced. No protectiom can mean no new products."

As the law stands, functional design enjoys copyright for the designer's life, plus 50 years. Aesthetic design is judged on eye appeal, not artistic merit, for 15 years from its first launch date. The Government now propose three different kinds of protection: design right, registered designs and copyright. I believe that in practice these proposals are weak. Design right gives protection against copying for functional as well as aesthetic works applied industrially for 10 years, but the last five years are subject to a licence of right, giving an effective protection of only five years.

Registration gives a monopoly for 25 years on industrial-supplied designs having aesthetic merit. Registration must be applied for and it is not cheap. Copyright mainly covers surface decoration and industrially applied designs against copying genuine copyright. However, when design has been exploited in one article, protection against it being copied in another is limited to 25 years. It applies to graphic works, photographs, sculptures or collages, irrespective of artistic quality, and to works of artistic merit. The Bill increases the general protection for registered designs from 13 to 25 years.

The CBI also recently carried out comparisons with overseas competitors and produced a study that shows that, if the Bill becomes law, protection in the United Kingdom will be much less than what is available to competitors abroad in the domestic markets. The CBI argues that the best form of intellectual property right to protect design is copyright. It does not give an absolute monopoly, and so new generations of original design are

not hindered. It comes into existence automatically and does not involve costly procedures, which is particularly important to small and medium-sized companies.

During my experience with the Wigan development company, these were precisely the sort of companies with which we were invoived, and we tried to attract private and public capital to encourage such companies to invest in new ideas and in long-term new job opportunities. It would be a sad development for British industry if those companies were affected—albeit unwittingly—by the Government, if amendments to the Bill are not accepted.

The impact on competition is less than in cases in which an absolute monopoly is given. The CBI wrote to the Minister and set out five proposals, which would form the basis for amendments that the Government should consider in Committee. They are: the restoration of dual protection by design copyright, as well as the new design right; increasing the design right term to 25 years; the removal of the unwarranted extended exceptions "must fit" and "must match", and their inclusion in the Bill as defences against infringement, rather than as exceptions to the right of protection; the control of possible abuse of monopoly by the provision of a power to grant licences in appropriate cases where abuse is shown; and the provision for the Secretary of State to have the power, in certain sections of industry or in particular cases, to reduce the term from 25 years, as appropriate, or to provide for the grant of licences within that term, as appropriate to different industrial needs.

I can understand the motor manufacturers' interest in this matter. I represent a constituency in the north-west and I know that a great number of people are directly or indirectly employed by the motor manufacturing industry. My borough has suffered from the massive shake-up of British Leyland, John Brown Tractors and the automotive products industry. So the pressure that was applied to the other place was understandable, and their Lordships came to their conclusions accordingly. However, as Conservative Members have said, the balance has shifted too far in the direction of that sector of interest to the possible detriment of the development of industry as a whole. We need seriously to consider redressing the balance to ensure both that the motor manufacturers' interests are preserved and that the legitimate interests of other sectors of the British economy are not undermined.

Like other hon. Members, I have an interest in other important areas of controversy in the Bill—piracy, photography, music, information technology products, and the design of same.

In the time left to me, I should like to give my support to those hon. Members who have spoken on behalf of the photographic industry and the National Union of Journalists. I am also particularly concerned about the submissions made on behalf of the photographic industry in respect of some of the amendments. As politicians, we should all take kindly to the photographic industry as we are sometimes the beneficiaries of the artistic activities and work of those involved in the industry, although some of us are portrayed in a more flattering light than others. I am concerned that the livelihood of news photographers will be threatened. That has been amply outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I do not wish to go into detail on that, but I hope that the Minister will give a commitment seriously to consider in Committee amendments that take account of those anxieties.

I look forward to the Committee stage and hope that the Government will approach the amendments in a constructive manner and that we can bring forward a Bill which, if not acceptable to British industry and the arts as a whole, will nevertheless be acceptable to the vast majority. I hope that it will ensure, in the long run, that we protect the innovative skills of industry and the arts in this country. By protecting those skills, we protect both the internal and external markets which are so important to our economy and to the European economy as a whole.

By doing so, we shall also develop the economy of the north-west and rebuild and reshape it after the rundown of the traditional industries of shipbuilding, textiles and heavy engineering. That will provide an opportunity for those innovative skills to flourish. It will provide new jobs and industrial opportunities and a fair reward for those who, through their skills, develop new ideas and products to the benefit of their regions and of our industrial economy as a whole.

8.11 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): It has already been said that the Bill does not feature very highly in the Richter scale of political sexiness compared with other Bills before us this week. It could be described by people of a kind and charitable disposition as a technical, complex and heavy Bill. For that reason, I admire the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) when he says that he is looking forward to the Committee stage. I put that down to youthful enthusiasm and I hope that, if I serve on the Committee, some of his enthusiasm will rub off on me.

Mr. McCartney: It is perhaps because I am not married. I have nothing else to do.

Mr. Page: I do not think that the Bill will help the hon. Gentleman in that direction.

I hope that the Bill will help British industry and commerce. It is vital that we get the matter right. In the past, the United Kingdom has been a world leader in this area, but time and events have moved on. Everyone agrees that the Copyright Act 1956 must be updated, but there are obviously some differences of opinion about the way to proceed.

There is a rumour that the long-awaited Green Paper from the European Commission is due shortly, but we cannot wait for it. We need to modernise our copyright law and, if we wait for the Green Paper, it will take a considerable time for any harmonisation to take place.

One of the traditional problems of copyright has been to explain to the layman what it is. That has been made even more complex through the scientific advances, giving, day by day, easier public access to intellectual property rights. The Bill has to achieve a fair balance between the creator and the producer on one side and the consumer and user on the other. One group wants strong protection and control whereas the other wants immediate access, preferably at no cost, but, if the consumer has to pay anything, it must be the cheapest price. We must strike a balance in the middle. We must protect civil liberties, but we must not discourage creativity, research and innovation. If I remember the matter correctly from my school days, an equation must balance. We must put something into that equation to recognise the constantly changing scientific scene.

[Mr. Page]

One of the most common examples is records. Some hon. Members will remember the old bakelite discs, although they were before my time. We then moved on to plastic discs, analogue tapes and compact discs and digital audio tapes are now appearing on the horizon. With that rapidly moving scientific scene, we must get the matter right.

The figures quoted as representing the contribution of copyright to our gross domestic product have varied from 2·6 per cent. to 7·5 per cent., depending on which base one takes. However, whichever base one takes, those figures represent a sizeable contribution to our economy. That sheer size demands our attention. We must have justice for both sides. I am tempted to quote the Emperor Justinian who said:

"Justice is the constant and perpetual wish to render to everyone his due."

Perhaps that is not a good example because the Roman empire collapsed a few years later and the Barbarians won with their motto that might is right.

I welcome the provisions that bring about stronger legal support in respect of infringement of copyright. A few holes must still be plugged, but we have taken a substantial step along the right path. The updating of our copyright law is vital because, whatever our faults as a nation, and we have quite a few, we have two strengths—our ingenuity and our inventiveness. It is right for the Government to protect that ingenuity and strength. I do not know how we have come by that, but, as an island race, we have always had an open door for refugees and exiles, in addition to experiencing the odd invasion. There is an old saying that those who get up and go, get up and go. Perhaps some of them have come here and contributed to the cultural strength of our nation.

The House should be grateful to the other place. It has given the Bill the first canter round the course and has highlighted the areas of agreement and disagreement. Those debates have given the interested parties a chance to contribute. The march of technology has created much of the reason for the Bill. I was impressed to see that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has put into the Bill a clause to deal with computer-generated products and artificial intelligence and, in Committee, we shall see a closer definition of that work.

I hope that, in Committee, we shall touch again on the issues introduced tonight. We have heard much about the "must-fit" and "must-match" problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) provided a powerful trailer to the arguments to be advanced. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) outlined the case for the blank tape levy exceedingly well. I have no doubt that those arguments will be put forward again in Committee.

I also hope that the Committee will consider more closely the terms employed in the Bill and try to cover the computer software advances that are taking place. I support my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton in that. I hope too that we shall consider some of the mundane matters, for example, some of the definitions of what is a film. The 1956 Act defines a film as a recording of visual images on any medium from which a moving picture may be, by any means, produced. Most films today have a soundtrack with them and I hope that we can deal with that point. We should also have a stab at defining a public performance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden has outlined the need to clear up the position of location systems using abstracts of scientific and technical publications and I hope that that can be brought within the copyright law.

The main point on which I want to concentrate my argument and the minds of hon. Members was voiced by the Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham in the other place when he spoke about the impact of rental shops and digital audio tapes in downtown Tokyo. He mentioned the impact that that was having on Japan's recording industry. In fact, it almost ruined it and Japan has now introduced copyrights to protect its industries, although it has not helped too much on the international scene.

As Britain has a leading position in international records—I am told that it has some 25 per cent. of the market—that area must be considered and protected. I am aware that my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry introduced a rental right at the end of the Bill's passage in the other place to give some protection, but I hope that our Standing Committee will consider whether that is sufficient. I took some encouragement from my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he said that he would like to look at that to make sure that he was satisfied that we have got it right.

Again, time moves against us and I know that many of my hon. Friends want to speak. Therefore, I shall confine my remarks to one last point in reply to the reference to spoilers and anti-spoilers. I hope that not too much faith is placed on such devices. Time has shown that for every lock there is a key and we should look to the law to be the belt to any braces of any electrical or mechanical spoiling device.

I welcome the Bill. I hope that in Committee it proceeds with the same spirit of friendship and constructiveness that exists in the House today, and I look forward to it reaching the statute book in the shortest possible time.

8.21 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): This is a complex and multifaceted piece of legislation, which covers different areas of interest for many hon. Members. I wonder whether I could ask even those right hon. and hon. Members who are waiting to speak to turn aside from studying the massive injustices that the Bill, I now learn, will inflict on journalists, who are usually a hardy breed and very good at turning injustices on to other people—I am sorry about their future suffering—and away also from the most fascinating subject that was raised earlier, the regime for replicating motor exhausts, to something that genuinely excites me—the computer industry and the protection of its intellectual heritage.

I must declare an interest. It is not a financial interest any longer now that I am here; it is a professional interest. I was trained by ICL as a computer programmer. I went on to be an assistant analyst and computer consultant with 10 years hands-on experience in the industry. I am now enjoying an industry and Parliament fellowship with IBM, and I maintain links with my old colleagues who are now senior members of the British Computer Society.

I welcome the Bill, which aims to set the matter of copyright protection on a more logical and consistent

basis, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster says. It seeks to strike the balance between rewarding the creator of an artistic endeavour without stifling invention—a difficult balance to achieve.

I am not absolutely comfortable that the Bill is yet full enough to protect computer software. I use the words "full enough" on purpose. That may be because it does not recognise the uniqueness of computer software. I wonder whether the definition of computer software as a subset of literary works is accurate or adequate enough to perform the task of copyright protection.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) reminded us that in 1956 computers were the size of a house. He must have been referring to Leo I in London university, which was housed opposite the British museum in three separate houses. I cannot say that it created pseudo-Shakespeare, because no binary-coded decimal machine code is a naturally aurally appealing tongue. But I recall creating fugues on early computers. On the other hand, I cannot imagine that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) would, in consequence, indentify software as a byproduct of J. S. Bach.

Computer software is the product of new methods of identifying and transmitting human thought. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton referred to artificial intelligence when he said how difficult it was to define computer software. That is so very old. Software is not artificial; it is real. It is definable and it can be properly protected.

We must not wait until 1992. The suggestion put forward earlier that this is such a complicated industry that we could not do it now is absolutely wrong. Once the Government have created the redefinition of computer software which is right and appropriate, this will be no U-turn but a set of nano-second decisions by the Secretary of State which will bring the Government to the right conclusions. Indeed, if we are stuck we can find a suitably equipped personal computer, with doubtless superbly registered parts, compatible and user-friendly to help. I am tempted to say that we might bring in to the House a new language that would certainly be more Member-friendly than that which we heard earlier. Hon. Members will know that one of the easiest computer languages is called BASIC. It is certainly basic, but not as primitive as that used by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds).

Let me return to the difficulty, suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton, of protecting the product, computer software, which is the creation of a rapidly changing industry. He gave the impression that that is well-nigh impossible. Of course, it is not, because change is the essence of the computer industry. If the computer industry were not changing, it would be dying.

I cannot use the term "manifestly" impossible. That has a Latin root. We must remember when we are thinking about computer software that our language is literary and how difficult it is to think in any other terminology. We have to think laterally to find a definition that fits this unique product.

Hon. Members have said that a person who is out of programming for three years will have to be wholly retrained. Of course, such a person will need to be updated, but the industry moves forward in a way that enables a person to return to play a useful part. The state of the art means that we have to think differently for the products of software designers—those few highly creative people—and the ordinary programmer. Although they create different levels of excellent product, both are still creating protectable work.

Let me deal briefly with a few amendments that I know that the Government will wish to consider and doubtless will consider in Committee. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton does not need to go back to 1956 because we have the excellent Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Act 1985. One of the provisions in that Act was important. It made it clear that storing a work in a computer is a form of reproduction which requires the copyright owner's consent. The Bill does not make that clear. I feel confident that the Government intend to uphold the promise that was made on that in the other place and that we shall see an amendment to clause 17(2) to that effect.

Let me deal now with a more complicated problem. The White Paper in its introduction states that

"we must accommodate new technical developments—satellite broadcasting, computer programs and electronic data storage"

and so on.

The creation of expert systems that not only answer the questions put to them, not on paper of course, but through keyboards, for example, such as a medical diagnostic system or others, at the moment fall under the clauses relating to cable programmes. That is to say, data bases which are changed interactively through user-connected terminals—as we have all done so often in the computer field—over a telecommunications network are defined as expert systems.

As the Bill stands, clause 7(2)(a) may seem to exclude such valuable systems from protection. I feel confident that the Government will introduce an amendment to rectify that situation as was offered on Second Reading in the other place.

In the Bill, as a subset of literary works, computer programs come within the fair dealing provisions of clause 29. Therefore, it may appear that home copying of computer software can now be exempted from copyright infringement on the grounds that it is for private study and that research organisations may justify the copying of programs on the basis that it is for research purposes. I am sure that that comes about because clause 29 refers so much to literary and other such works. I suggest that that would be an unintended consequence of the provisions which would be unwelcome to the industry and the Government. All that is needed is an amendment to exclude electronic reproduction from the fair dealing clause 29. I am confident that that will be considered.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister referred to a welcome amendment to deal with spoilers. I was not absolutely clear whether he would incorporate in that amendment programs that already exist to prevent the illicit copying of programs. There are programs in production already designed to defeat the software protection mechanism.

Clause 24 makes it an offence to possess an article that can be used to make infringing copies. I doubt whether a program, within the meaning of the Bill, is classified as an article and would therefore come within that provision. If that is so, the clause would have to be changed to make it

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

clear that possessing one of the copy-making programs that already exist would be an offence similar to possessing an infringing printing plate.

I have left possibly the most difficult point to last. Copyright works of all descriptions—literary, artistic, musical, photographic, software, film or sound recordings—can now be recorded and reproduced from a single optical disc. That point throws up many weaknesses in the Bill. It butts on eight separate clauses. If left untouched, it could lead to unmanageable results. Would it not be better to have a copyright law which treated all works of intellectual endeavour in the same way? Otherwise, we might inadvertently end up with a very difficult patch job on the old law rather than creating the new, necessary safety net. That is a complex problem. I could describe it at length, but other hon. Members want to speak on that. Indeed I could stress the eight different clauses which will be in conflict with each other and which will make that point unmanageable for optical discs.

The Minister referred to rental right. I am delighted to learn that that subject will be examined, perhaps through the introduction of a clause already discussed in another place, to permit the provisions of clause 63 to be overridden by contract. I also strongly welcome the Government dropping the tape levy. Such a levy would have encouraged home copying of computer software. That would be unmanageable. From the social angle, dropping the levy is of great value to the blind. As a musician I welcome the Government's decision and am comfortable with it.

We can be market leaders in software protection. We are much further ahead than any other European country in that area. Justifiably, I look to the Government to secure for us that enviable position. Britain is a world leader in some forms of computer software. Let us support that work.

8.32 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I was greatly impressed by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and by her special knowledge of computers and other matters—until she made her point about the blank tape levy.

Although I personally have no financial interest at all in the Bill, no fewer than four of my close relations have interests in recording or copyright matters. My wife is an actress and singer who records. My brother-in-law is the composer Panufnik, whose symphonies and other works are recorded. I have a sister who has written 18 books, and my brother has an interest, recently much reduced, in a record company. Although perhaps not obliged to do so, I prefer to declare those family interests.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster referred to the need to "protect creative talent". To be creative seems to me to be fundamental. The creativity of artists, performers, composers and writers is basic to the enrichment of people's lives. In the House of Commons, perhaps because we are properly at the receiving end of so many time-consuming welfare cases of constituents, we do not always devote enough time or give enough weight to the creative side of human life, which is just as important to human well-being and which Parliament ought to encourage. We should positively lean in that direction.

Of course the successful management and growth of the British economy brought about by the Government can benefit the livelihood of artists and musicians as everyone else. Beyond that, the Bill does much to promote and sustain what is creative. On the whole, I support the Bill. However, there is one glaring omission to which many right hon. and hon. Members have referred. There are no royalties or levies on blank tapes. I hope that we can put that right and I want to explain why.

At live performances, musicians or actors in essence sell their work through the agency of a theatre or concert hall to an audience who pay for their seats. That is a free bargain between the artist and audience. With modern technology, the performance can be recorded on discs, films or tapes which can be sold to individuals or the media. That, again, is a free bargain between the artist and the audience. However, that professional recording can be poached and put on to a cheap blank tape which can be purchased for £1. That is not a fair or free bargain. That is stealing someone's professional work. It is close to theft. It is an injustice which the House should not countenance. Nor should we gloss over it; because only the Government and Parliament can take effective action to remedy that injustice.

That point was made in the White Paper in 1986, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) referred extensively. I will not read the whole of that passage from White Paper again, but part of it states:

> "After giving full and careful consideration to all the opinions expressed in response to the 1985 Green Paper, the Government has concluded that:
>
> (a) copyright owners and performers should be remunerated for the use of their material and performances by those who tape them at home to the prejudice of the legitimate interests of the copyright owners;
>
> (b) there is no realistic alternative to a compulsory levy on blank recording tape as a means of providing such remuneration."

That was the Government policy announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, at a press conference in 1986 and that view was constantly and frequently repeated.

I received a letter in November 1986 from my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), the then Leader of the House, on behalf of the Government in which he stated:

> "The Government remain committed to the proposals for legislation on intellectual property as set out in the White Paper on Intellectual Property and Innovation. I can assure you that we have not dropped the proposals for a blank tape levy and the necessary legislation will be introduced when the Parliamentary timetable permits."

Our policy was consistent with the European trends. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton listed those countries in Europe with similar views. All Common Market countries have brought in a scheme for such a levy or are bringing one in except Britain, Ireland and Greece. It is possible that we shall have to introduce such a scheme anyway before long, so we may as well get on with it now.

In West Germany the levy money is distributed 42 per cent. to composers, 42 per cent. to performers and producers and 16 per cent. to literary authors or the

equivalent. Another form of distribution exists in France. The levy money can be distributed fairly and equitably and in accordance with the type of scheme run by the Performing Right Society. The administrative costs of such a scheme should obviously be financed from the scheme. The beneficiaries of the scheme would have a strong incentive to ensure that its administration was economical. That is the answer to those who complain about the likely administrative costs.

All the blank tapes used in this country are manufactured abroad—60 per cent. come from Japan, and 40 per cent. from West Germany. The manufacturers of blank tapes in Germany can hardly be surprised if we put a levy on them, because the West Germans already have a levy on their blank tapes.

The proposed levy is 10 per cent. which is 10p on a £1 blank tape. Thanks to our growing prosperity, a 10p charge is no hardship for anyone, not even the young. It is a third of the price of a cup of coffee in a third class café. By no stretch of the imagination could it be called, as my right hon. and learned Friend described it, an unfair burden.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the cost of administration in West Germany is approximately 7 per cent.? That figure might be of interest to those hon. Members who are concerned about what they perceive as high administrative costs. That 7 per cent. seems admirable.

Mr. Jessel: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I did not know that figure, but I expect that he is right, and I have no reason to doubt it.

The 10p might even be absorbed by the producers, as has happened with petrol tax increases, but if not, the levy would not be burdensome, even to blind people. Everyone wants to help blind people. One person in 300 is registered as blind or partially sighted. I am told that the average person buys eight blank tapes a year, and even if blind people buy twice that many—16 a year—at a 10p levy, that would be £1·60 a year, or 3p a week. Therefore, I do not believe it is right to use the position of blind people to stir up emotion against the proposal. I do not believe that the blind, of all people, would wish to stand in the way of actors, composers and musicians receiving a fair reward for what they have produced, merely to save that 3p per head per week each. In any case, there is every reason to think that the music industry would help. The reference to the blind is something of a red herring and the argument has been abused.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to rough justice. I am told that 85 to 90 per cent. of blank tapes are used to copy copyright material, almost entirely music. After all, not many people want to buy blank tapes to record the speeches of hon. Members. Yes, the levy is rough justice, but so are local authority rates and so will community charges be if we have them. Those local charges are or will be imposed regardless of the unequal use that people make or will make of education, local road repairs or the other services of local authorities. Everybody understands that point; nobody minds it. The same would apply to the rough justice of the levy on blank tapes. My right hon. and learned Friend said that the benefit should go mainly to the performers—I could not agree more—and that could be done along the lines of the West German example.

My noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has to deal with many major matters of crucial importance to the future of our national prosperity. He said in the other place that the arguments on the tape levy were finely balanced. It is no disrespect to him to say that it is not self-evident that his proposals are more authentic than those of his immediate predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West, who had previous experience for some years as Minister for the Arts, and was thereby steeped in the needs of the musical world. I profoundly believe that the 1986 White Paper is right, and I hope that the Government will listen, heed the arguments and think again.

8.44 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Those right hon. and hon. Members who have waded through the hundreds of clauses and the various schedules of the Bill and reached the last page will notice among the repeal list that the Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Act 1985 is to be repealed in full. For most hon. Members, and most members of the public, consigning this statute to the footnotes of history will be of very little moment. For me, it is a matter of considerable importance, because I was the promoter of that Act. A number of right hon. and hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), have referred to the effect of that statute, which was intended to be a stopgap measure. It has been wholly beneficial to the industry. This Bill will take over from where we left off, and I shall come on to endorse a point made by my hon. Friend in relation to clause 17(2).

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), in his important contribution, said that there was an atmosphere of déja vu about this debate. Those of us who, on those various Fridays in 1985, went through the debates on my Act will have that sense of déja vu. I am sure that the knowledge that I spoke for over an hour on the Second Reading debate has had an important deterrent effect on today's debate. I have no doubt that the fear that I might do likewise tonight has concentrated minds marvellously.

I am able to make a very different speech now at quarter to nine in the evening than I would have done if I had had the opportunity of occupying the Floor for an hour or more. I hope that that will come as a relief to hon. Members. I merely want to reflect on the important themes that I stressed then and that are of importance now, not just for the Bill but for the computer software industry. The first relates to enforcement and the second to a much wider interest in computer software and education.

Let me deal firstly with enforcement. The powers in the Bill are not sufficient to ensure the proper enforcement of the proposed law, certainly as far as it affects the computer software industry. In 1985 I told the House how we would try to ensure that my Bill, if it became an Act of Parliament, would be enforced. I am delighted to say that FAST—the Federation Against Software Theft—established a law enforcement agency under a former senior police officer in the Metropolitan police, Mr. Bob Hay, and it has had considerable success, both in practical and deterrent terms, in reducing the level of piracy in the computer software industry.

The current estimates are that FAST, through Mr. Hay's office, is reducing the level of software piracy by at

[Mr. William Powell]

least £50 million a year and that is a fairly substantial achievement for what was intended to be a modest, stopgap measure. However, for the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West has given, I am afraid that the Bill, as it is currently drafted in clause 17(2), does not produce any important amendment to section 2 of my Act. I shall be doing all that I can to ensure that the matter that my hon. Friend raised—I do not need to go into it in full at this stage—is fully reproduced in this statute and that a program stored within a computer is as fully protected as anything that has been produced from a computer.

The presumptions need to be fully thought out. When the Bill was originally produced in the other place, there was a presumption of subsistence and ownership of copyright. During the course of the exhaustive Committee stage that the Bill underwent in the other place, that part of the Bill was taken out. However, it must be put back again. If it is to be necessary for the victim of new software piracy to establish the presumption that exists at the moment, it will cost vast sums in solicitors' fees, and so on, to bring the necessary proof to court. One of the things that we were able to do in 1985 was to prevent that. If we can save the authors of copyrights from these wholly unnecessary legal costs, we must do so. If we cannot restore what was removed in the other place, it will cost tens of thousands of pounds.

It is important to establish that trading standards officers have a role in the enforcement of this law. My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) spoke about that earlier. In some ways, trading standards officers have a more important role than that of the police. Importation of pirated software is a major issue, and, although the Government take the view that Customs officers are not yet equipped to deal with this, the statute must extend the powers of the Customs, if necessary by delegated legislation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) said that the introduction of private Member's legislation is not a satisfactory way of dealing with problems as they arise. Hon. Members have stressed that many problems will arise in the next 10, 15 or 20 years during the currency of this statute, and none of us has any idea of what they will be. In 1985 the computer software industry faced the most enormous difficulties because of the pirating of its products and there was a gaping hole in law enforcement. Hundreds of millions of pounds worth of goods were at risk and many authors lost the opportunity to profit from their work and from everything that went with it. The software industry had to rely on the lottery of the private Member's ballot and had to hope that somebody would be prepared to take up the cause. That is a most unsatisfactory way to deal with such matters.

The film industry was particularly at risk in 1983 when the measure introduced by Lord Eden of Winton, as he now is, was almost lost in the hasty deals that had to be made because Parliament was being dissolved for the coming general election. That is no way to treat our important industries and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will seriously consider the point that was made with considerable force by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton.

I do not have time to develop the important points that I would like to make about education and the computer software industry. Perhaps we shall have an opportunity to deal with those matters in the Standing Committee. I welcome the Bill. It is a question of striking balances on a wide range of complicated issues about which the arguments are never all in one direction. As a result of considerable consultation and the tremendous efforts of my right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors the Government have got the Bill very nearly right. However, we shall have to look at some matters and I shall reserve my detailed contributions for later debates.

8.45 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Before speaking about the Bill I should like to comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I think that he not too seriously chided my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for a Bill that he said went against the Government's free market and capitalist principles and was in some ways interventionist. Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman is not in the Chamber, but I am sure that he would agree that not only is the invisible hand of the market one of the cornerstones of capitalism or classical liberalism—call it what we will—but that another buttress of classical liberalism and a capitalist society is property and the right to own it and defend it. That does not mean only physical property, such as buildings, but obviously means intellectual property. I am sure that if Adam Smith were alive today he would not have intellectual conflict between the sort of society and economic system that he would support and this Bill.

It is refreshing to see the Government bring forward a Bill that updates and prepares for the 1990s the area of intellectual property rights. I welcome the Government's refusal to support the tape lobby's proposals to legitimise home copying. The United Kingdom is the home of a growing and profitable software industry. Any legislation that fosters the expectation that the purchase of some recording medium, such as a magnetic tape or disc, can automatically confer the right to copy a third party's information without the owner's permission must weaken the opportunities for our software industry to develop and market its products. To United Kingdom software houses, a tape levy would encourage theft of property—in this case intellectual property.

My first concern about the Bill was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) who spoke about the effect of registered design on small businesses. On any product there are many new features with many new designs related to them. My understanding is that under the Bill all these new designs would have to be registered. That would be very costly and bureaucratic for small businesses. The current copyright law would give those designs automatic protection. This would particularly hit small businesses in, for example, textiles, clothes, jewellery, carpeting and crockery. Young fashion designers would be exposed to not being able to bear the costs of registering their designs and would be defenceless against copiers.

My main concern about the Bill relates to the "must match, must fit" clauses because they will weaken the incentives for British companies to innovate. They will set the United Kingdom apart from all the major industrialised nations in the Economic Community at a

time when we are moving towards 1992 and harmonisation. The Bill excludes from all protection many products which are not spare parts and which could be freely copied. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke listed many of those products, such as hi-fi, vacuum cleaners, television sets and castings for personal computers. The "must fit" clause could have some unfortunate ramifications for toy companies such as Lego and Meccano, which depend on interlocking designs—as do prefabricated housing systems. In both instances—and there are others—protection will be lost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke rightly mentioned that the "must match" clause encompasses every type of product casing formed from two or more pieces. Presumably, vacuum cleaners, typewriters, hi-fi components, tea pots and personal computer casings will come under the clause.

I now refer to some of the assumptions that the Government have made in putting forward the clause. They have assumed that the "must match" exception clause will benefit consumers through lower prices. In fact, copiers widely copy only those parts that are most required. They do not copy less commonly required spare parts. In the motor industry that would include body panels for aged car models, which would normally be owned by people on lower incomes. Prices would have to be put up, because the original equipment manufacturer would compensate for loss of margins on the more commonly copied body panels by upping his prices for those that only he would still make available to the market place.

There is an assumption that the "must match" exception clause will increase competition and consumer choice. When a consumer buys a vehicle, when he chooses which manufacturer to go to, one criterion is the availability, quality and cost of spare parts that the original equipment manufacturer produces. Although I am a keen advocate of competition, I fear that the "must match" exception clause takes the theory of competition to rather esoteric lengths.

The next assumption inherent in the "must match" exception clause is that current manufacturers are ripping off the consumer. That is not a fair assumption. For example, in 1986 the Ford Motor Company's return on all sheet metal parts was only 3·6 per cent. That is hardly a huge margin. The clause will put us out of step with the rest of the Common Market. It will prevent us from creating a common market in that respect. For example, in every industrialised country in the European Community there is a 15-year protection for spare parts such as car body panels. Because of that, the clause will do nothing to aid employment in the motor industry.

Currently, most copying is done by body panel manufacturers in Taiwan, Spain and Italy. Because of the protection that will continue to exist in the European Community, it will not be possible for British copiers, who, at the moment, are mainly merely importers, to have any market for which to compete. Therefore, as was suggested by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), the clause will do nothing to aid the motor industry or jobs within it.

The other flaw in the "must match" exception clause is the assumption that there will be a direct link between its effects and the consumer. Any differential in price between a body panel from an original equipment manufacturer in the motor industry and that from a copier is absorbed by the repairer in the body shop that is doing the repair work. The consumer rarely knows what the price differential is. He or she rarely knows whether the body panel being fitted to their vehicle was manufactured by the original manufacturer or by a counterfeiter. Therefore, the assumptions in the Bill do not apply.

I am aware that time is pressing on, so I shall curtail my remarks. The "must match" clause will seriously undermine industry's ability to fund innovative design and engineering, which are vital to this country's competitive position. But one should not criticise the "must match" exception clause without putting forward an alternative constructive solution. My solution would be to allow the copyright tribunal to hear and resolve cases of monopoly abuse of articles covered by design copyright—for instance, motor car spare parts. If original equipment manufacturers abuse what could be seen to be their monopoly position in the market place, the copyright tribunal could award compulsory licences to other manufacturers who are willing to make the same body panels and make them available in the market place. That would be similar to the precedent of the powers of the patent comptroller under the Patents, Designs and Marks Act 1986.

I have concentrated on a certain aspect of the Bill, the "must match" exception clause and the "must fit" exception clause. It may appear that I have been critical. I have doubts and concerns about those aspects of the Bill. Because of its complexity and breadth, many hon. Members have voiced concerns about some aspects and clauses of the Bill. However I believe that there is strong support on both sides of the House for the majority of the objectives that the Government seek to achieve. I look forward to serving on the Standing Committee and continuing to support the Government in bringing forward the Bill.

9.5 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): There are times when it seems that a Back Bencher's speech must be like a pair of bellows. It expands to take account of the green acres opposite graced only by the Three Musketeers—the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). Then, as one looks at one's own Benches and sees the eager faces all around, it contracts again to what one might describe as a Whip's allowance.

This is a big and very complicated Bill and we shall deal with it in Committee. I want to highlight three aspects in which I have a constituency interest. Many of my constituents are employed by a trio of industries which are affected by the legislation that we are taking on its first stage through the House tonight.

First, I want to refer to the pharmaceutical industry. It is absolutely right that we should establish throughout the Bill the value of the right to copy. If the Government seek to encourage competition, an open market, the transfer of the property right must reflect its value. A pharmaceutical company, which needs a return on a product to fund future research and development, must obtain appropriate value before the surrender of that right. The pharmaceutical industry in 1988 is truly international. That means that it could and would migrate if a 20-year patent life were not

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granted to it. I welcome the fact that the Government propose to return to the status quo of 1978 to restore that balance to the industry.

There is also a spare parts industry in Swindon. It is in a different situation. The industry covers not just motor car spare parts, as many would think, but domestic appliances, industrial, agricultural and garden machinery, office equipment and electrical equipment. In fact, 400,000 jobs or more in this industry are affected by the Bill.

The proposed unregistered design right includes spare parts and draws them into an author monopoly of 15 years' duration. The Government have drastically altered the balance between spare parts manufacturers and orignators of the product, and either spare parts should be exempt or the value of the right should be established clearly and it should be sold.

The third area that I want to discuss tonight has been referred to often in the debate today. It is the question of what we do about the music industry. The concept of value is most significant when copying is undetectable, unpreventable and effectively unpunishable. If the owner of the copyright cannot enforce it, he has, in my view, the right to redress, to compensation.

For the music industry this problem is a serious one. Home taping is widespread. Many hon. Members have referred to this situation. More than 80 million tapes were used last year to copy music illegally. Now, coming over the horizon we have compact disc and digital audio tape. These will soon replace the records and cassettes of today. The technology will move on and every home taper will become a potential commercial pirate. The quality of the new materials is such that piracy in the home becomes a possibility, not just piracy in terms of imports from abroad. The existing £700 million a year haemorrhage from the record industry will not only continue but worsen. One should take note of a British industry that can export £400 million worth of goods every year and reflect that maybe it might be in the interests of Government and Parliament to look after it. I did not say protect it; I said look after it. Its export earnings makes the record industry one of the best in this country, and its problems will be multiplied several times over if we do not find a way in this legislation of guarding against the worsening problem of home taping.

Will the Government continue to wash their hands and say, "Copyright is all very well but if you cannot enforce it there is nothing else we are prepared to do"? The Government have agreed to royalties, licences of right and several other ways of recognising that an author and originator of intellectual property has a right to a return on what he has created. It cannot be right that one industry should be singled out for separate treatment that says, "Yes, you have that right, but no, we are not prepared to help you to enforce it."

I do not accept the argument of Ministers that it is too difficult to collect a royalty from those who infringe with home taping. It is a simple matter to collect from source, from the manufacturers, and to distribute through one of the existing collecting societies. The idea expressed by the Secretary of State in another place that a half or a quarter of the income from the collection of a levy would be lost in administration is simply wrong. The figure of 7 per cent. in West Germany gives us a guide to what the true level of administration costs could be.

The question of rough justice has been advanced as a reason for not proceeding with a royalty or levy. I follow other hon. Members in saying that we have many examples in our society of rough justice. Anyone who pays rates but is not a parent loses out because two thirds will go on the cost of local education. Anyone who pays his gas and electricity bills on time will lose out because the bills will be higher than they need have been if all fellow citizens had taken the trouble to pay their bills on time. The whole of our society is littered with examples of rough justice and it is not good enough to say that this industry should be left at the mercy of copyright infringers because an element of rough justice is involved in collecting the levy.

A levy is not a tax; it is an exchange of value from the user to the originator of copyright. The Government merely create the circumstances in which fair play can take place. Just as they set up the legal system to ensure that theft can be punished, so they are capable of creating a position where this type of theft, and it is theft, can be dealt with in a way that is fair to the person who is aggrieved.

The Committee must return to the question how Parliament should defend a great British industry which is under severe attack. In that respect I welcome the announcement of my right hon. and learned Friend that moves to restrict the rental rights are to be introduced in Committee. Obviously, that is the right way to proceed and it will receive warm support from all who have spoken tonight. But that is only part of the problem. In Committee, we must look for a new initiative from the Government. Those who hope to serve on the Committee will want to support the Government in that, because they recognise that the situation cannot be left intact.

I welcome the Bill which is much needed. After 32 years it is time for a good overhaul, just as two years ago we argued that the Shops Act 1950 was due for an overhaul, and still is. I hope that we can move forward without controversy to put the whole question of copyright, patents and designs on a modern and forward-looking footing—forward-looking because the technology will move on quickly from now. We must also look outwards to the EEC. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) pointed out so effectively, the EEC will bring to bear upon us precisely the format which we must achieve if we are to reflect harmonisation in 1992. We cannot afford to be insular in the way in which we tackle the problems that must be addressed in this Bill.

On the basis that the Government are forward-looking, I have the happy task of saying that the House should support the Bill.

9.15 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friends for compressing their speeches and to the Opposition Front Bench for allowing the last of the contributors to speak.

The provision introduced in another place to extend for ever the copyright on Peter Pan has certainly captured the public imagination. I trust that is not because the public regard Parliament as a pantomime!

The importance of the Bill has been stressed by every speaker. Many hon. Members said, and I agree, that the

Government have fought hard to achieve a successful balance between protection of the intellectual property of an originator, which is so important to our society, and a fair degree of competition. In this they have succeeded.

I particularly welcome a measure that will affect my constituency, the lifting of "licence of right" relating to the last four years of the copyright for the pharmaceutical industry. Effectively, the change will mean that pharmaceutical companies will have the benefit of the last eight years of the 20 years during which they have a guaranteed monopoly, whereas previously they had only four years out of 16. The first 12 years is typically taken up by development. I know that the change will make a big difference to them.

With regard to the blank tape levy issue, which has come up time and again, I cannot help thinking that the figures are disproportionate. We are told that this is one of the biggest industries in the country. Some people have produced incredible figures. One speaker talked of £15,000 million and another mentioned £20,000 million, whereas for the recovery from blank tapes we are talking of perhaps £9 million. There must be a simpler method to deal with the problem, if we decide eventually that it is getting out of hand, than a levy on every tape with the hassles involved, such as rebates to special groups such as the blind.

In the main, I welcome the Bill; it is very important. I wanted to speak in the debate—I volunteered for the Standing Committee, and I hope that the Committee of Selection will consider me as there is nothing wrong with volunteering occasionally—because clause 224, which deals with Crown user right, and clause 151, which deals with first ownership of new design rights, run against the balance in the rest of the Bill. They do so because they represent a serious threat to some sectors of research and development in this country.

I believe strongly that the Government have got the economy on its feet in a permanent and sustainable way, but I am worried about the amount of research and development in the private sector, which is still far too low.

Private sector research and development in the United Kingdom is only 1·1 per cent. of GDP, as against 1·4 per cent. in the United States, 1·6 per cent. in West Germany and 1·9 per cent. in Japan. I shall explain why the two clauses might prevent our figure from improving. Clause 224 gives to the Government Crown user rights that amount to confiscation. As it stands, the clause does not distinguish clearly between background and foreground information. It affects a Crown supplier such as a defence supplier—there are other types of Crown supplier, but defence is by far the biggest category—that has been commissioned to do a particular job and paid to develop a certain piece of equipment, however much background information may have been brought to the table.

Perhaps the company has included components developed at its own cost. It will almost certainly mean that there will be considerable know-how invested in the process. With many defence contracts, it is probable that even if the development was commissioned by the Government, a large proportion of its cost, as well as the cost of the parts brought to the table, has been paid for by the company. In many cases it is as much as half.

If the clause is not amended, the Ministry of Defence or one of the other Departments will be able to say, "We commissioned that, so, now that it has been developed, it is our property and we shall be able to hand it out to open competitive tender for the first production batch." The effect will be simple. In the short term, it will save the taxpayer a great deal of money. In the long term, it will ensure that in a generation's time we are importing most of our defence equipment. The people who will tender the lowest price for production contracts, if they are not let in the first phase to designers—subject to reasonable terms —will be companies that do not have the embarrassment of research and development overheads.

Clause 151 is parallel to that. It deals with first ownership of new design rights on a wider basis, outside Government suppliers. It is liable particularly to affect small companies.

I echo the warning of my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills). Like him, I shall seek to discuss those two clauses in Committee——

Mr. McCartney: If the hon. Gentleman gets on the Committee.

Mr. Brazier: That is right.

I should like to illustrate the depth of the problem with a story, which was alluded to by the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett). In 1937, Frank Whittle tried to get a contract from the Air Ministry to develop what appeared to be a sound scheme. In fact, it was the first ever jet engine. Only one organisation, the Royal Air Force, saw any merit in it. Finally, the RAF managed to persuade the Air Ministry to agree to it. The Treasury managed to sabotage the project through continually cutting off funds. Nevertheless, largely through private money, Frank Whittle drove through the scheme to the point at which, in 1943, he had more or less developed the jet engine. As a war was on, his design rights were confiscated and handed over to some American companies and two other British companies and his company was nearly shot from under him. Obviously, what one does in war is different from what one does in peacetime, but that is an illustration, in an extreme case, of what could happen if those two clauses are not examined carefully and amended in Committee.

This is a good Bill, which looks into a large number of different areas of this important subject. In all the areas except the one that I identified, it is a positive Bill. I am glad to have had the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

9.22 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): This has been an interesting and full debate. It was opened by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who spoke with all the enthusiasm and vim of those who know that their involvement with the Bill will be concluded with its Second Reading.

The Bill is a parliamentarian's nightmare. It is horribly complex and undeniably important and does not even have the spice of acute party controversy. That complexity is compounded by what my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to as the tremendous conflicts of interest that arise throughout the Bill. Not merely are we faced with competing claims, but many of them occur within a legitimate area of disagreement, so that we have problems of judgment added to those of complexity.

We shall judge the Bill according to those criteria. The Bill should take account of advances in technology. It

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should correct outstanding anomalies and clarify previously disparate and complex legislation it should bring us into line as far as possible with our international treaty obligations, particularly the Berne convention. It should attempt to hold sway fairly between the competing claims of the artist, the entrepreneur and the consuming public, and between rewarding investment and protecting consumers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) told us about the Bill's long gestation. There are probably two reasons for that. First, many of the problems seem virtually intractable. That is why we had not only the Whitford report of more than a decade ago, but three Green Papers and a recent White Paper. Each reached different conclusions from its predecessor and I suspect that the Bill will be amended substantially before it is passed. Secondly, although we are dealing mainly with copyright, other aspects of intellectual property such as patents, registered designs and trade marks impinge on that and overlap each other so that it is sometimes difficult to separate what is properly copyright from patent or design legislation.

There is further difficulty with copyright. New technology has brought so many changes and advances that we now have a whole range of problems that were virtually unimaginable 20 years ago and in some cases only five years ago. What H. G. Wells would have thought of as science fiction we think of as part of our ordinary home furniture.

Further pressures arise from the completion of the internal market in 1992 and the pressing need to ensure that, so far as possible, we come into line with Europe so we can compete on equal terms.

Copyright law faces a further critical problem. Copyright was developed first to protect artistic works and the creativity of artists. Almost immediately, however, those who were commercialising the creative work of artists also required protection for the investment that they undertook. The question then arose what to do about industrial functional design, which is not within the rubric of registered designs, because it is wholly functional, but in which investment is obviously required and which therefore requires some protection in law. The difficulty is that one can ask why copyright protection for investment in functional articles is any different from copyright protection for articles of artistic work. In other words, why should copyright law be any different for the record and for the car exhaust?

Here I agree with the Government in identifying the problem. With a functional item that should have its design protected because of the investment required but which the consumer is necessarily obliged to use because of its nature there is the danger of a misuse of the monopoly position of those who have designed the article. In principle, the functional article should be no different from the artistic work, but in practice it plainly is because of the possibility of abuse of monopoly.

The Bill is necessary to clear up issues of technological advance, to bring us into line with our treaty obligations and to meet the particularly difficult problems raised by the issue of industrial design. Therefore, we ask not whether the principle of the Bill is wrong but whether the Government have got the practical details right in relation to the difficulties to which I referred.

I shall deal with several key issues—first, the blank tape levy. Although the blank tape levy is important to the music industry in one sense, it is not of huge financial importance; it would bring the industry £6 million or £7 million a year. The music industry is justified in saying that an important principle is involved. At present, blank tapes are used extensively for home taping of copyright material. We know and accept that. It is in theory unlawful to do it; therefore, in theory, at least, the law is being broken on a fairly wide scale. A rational choice, and the choice faced up to by the White Paper, was either to make home taping lawful and to provide compensation for the copying, or to make it lawful and to provide no compensation.

What was not envisaged was that Parliament should consider the matter, aware that home taping is happening and that it is unlawful, and leave the law unaltered and abused. The Bill cannot go through as it is. Because it does not make home taping lawful, it accepts the justice of the claim that there should be copyright protection given to home taping, but it does not give any practical means of enforcement or any means of compensating for the unlawful action. That is an unjustifiable way of approaching the matter. We cannot say that the claim is justified, accept that there is no proper means of enforcing the law and then leave the law in its present unsatisfactory state.

Some of the objections to the blank tape royalty are specious. It has been said that the administrative cost of collecting and distributing the levy would be enormous. An analogy has been drawn with public lending rights and performing rights. The major difference is that the blank tape levy would operate within a narrow compass. Only a certain number of firms bring blank tape into the country. In West Germany, where there is such a system, the administrative costs amount to only about 7 per cent. of the money raised. Therefore, that is not a valid objection.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that most consumers who have respect for the creators of work accept that there should be compensation for the use of copyright material. When we examine again the proposal for a blank tape royalty within the context of the unsatisfactory nature of the law, we will be driven logically to adopt the view that there should be compensation for the abuse of copyright.

The White Paper originally made no provision for rental rights. Although that White Paper was published only two years ago, the Government said that they were not sure that rental rights required protection. The almost universal view that has emerged from today's debate is that rental rights should have protection. In other words, the position adopted by the White Paper that there should be no copyright protection of rentals has, by consensus, almost been rejected. Therefore, the question is whether in providing a rental right we are providing an effective right.

It all depends on the nature of the industry. The video film industry, for example, may be happy with one year. That is a fairly easy period for it to live with. However, if we consider those who produce, for example, the compact discs, which will last for a considerable time, or more especially those who produce computer software, it is extremely difficult to argue that the one-year rental period is a satisfactory method of protecting the investment.

Mr. William Powell: The hon. Gentleman makes a pertinent point, but he understates it. The truth of the matter is that the situation would be impossible for the computer software industry if the provision stood, because if protection was limited to only one year there would be no point in computer software developers even setting about their work.

Mr. Blair: I do not disagree with that point, but that is the limit of the protection given at present. I am saying that we have accepted that a rental right must exist. However, we have failed so far to face up to what that means in terms of giving adequate rental protection.

I spoke earlier about striking the right balance between the interests of industry and the consumer. Most people looking particularly at the computer industry, but also at the record industry and the potential for hiring out compact discs, would not think that that balance has been struck correctly in relation to rental rights. That also may need changing.

Further, there are the fair dealing provisions, where, if there is fair dealing in copying for the purposes of research or study, there is exemption from copyright infringement. Two problems arise on that. First, the Government have decided—so far at least—that there should be no payment by industry for copies of publications done for commercial research. I understand that the publishers have come back to the Government with a scheme, which is at least worth looking at, for some form of compensation to the authors of publications that are copied. We have not taken a position on that at this stage, but we shall have to look at it during the passage of the Bill.

I point out too that, as far as I am aware, the United States has the Coypright Clearance Centre which is its attempt to deal with the problem, and apparently it is working.

There is also the point made by my hon. Friends the Members for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and for Cunninghame, North about photographers. I have not yet heard the explanation for the proposal that photographers should lose any copyright protection when their work is used for the reporting of current events. One thing that photographers are concerned to do, which is essential to their commercial livelihood, is to have their photograpahs used either for news reels or newpapers for the reporting of current events. At the very least, we deserve an explanation of why they should lose any protection, on the basis of fair dealing, when such photographs are taken.

There are also problems associated with the conflict of copyright between the creator of the work and those commercialising it or particularly between journalists and newspaper proprietors. That point was raised passionately by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). It was a good trade union speech which shed an entirely new light on the hon. Gentleman. The point that he was making was about the inequality of bargaining power between the creator and the commercialiser of the work. That is the aspect which one must decide when considering which part of the copyright should take precedence.

The essential question is what one is attempting to compensate for when the rights of journalists and newspaper proprietors, or of artists and the record industry, conflict. It is important to realise that the economic bargaining power will, on the whole, rest with the commercialisers rather than with the creators. Contracts can alter any of these provisions—parties can agree to do something quite different from what the law lays down. They can, by contract, abstain from any of the rights that they have. In those circumstances, it seems all the more important that the correct balance is struck, both on copyright and on moral right. I am not certain that that balance has been correctly achieved. There are also the difficulties of establishing the copyright tribunal. They, too, will have to be examined.

I want to deal with the thorny issue of design rights. I agree that not all design of functional articles can be given protection, because of the danger of monopoly. In drawing the line we must take account of the investment being rewarded and the choice of the consumer—those are the competing claims. The Government propose that when the consumer must purchase an article that fits or matches the rest of a larger design there should be no protection. The problem is that it is irrational to discount investment only on that basis. In other words, to draw the line between protecting investment and the consumer by reference to a definition of design does not seem correct, because there may be a design that must fit and match but which has involved a huge amount of investment and should therefore be protected. That has been obscured, as the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) pointed out, by the obsession with car spare parts, but the problem is much broader than that. We should deal with the root of the problem—the fear of a lack of competition if monopoly power is abused—and that can be dealt with in a different way from that which the Government propose.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I am just about to sit down.

The Bill has many good parts and is a worthy effort. However, I still think that when it meets difficult problems it shakes them by the hand and walks away from them. We cannot afford to do that in Committee. We must ensure that this is a Bill for the future which stimulates our artists and enriches our consumers, while safeguarding our industry. That is our task in Committee. While we agree with the principle of the Bill on Second Reading, we reserve our position on its practical application.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. John Butcher): The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) rightly surmised that the Government are not walking away from the issues in the Bill. There are those who are alarmed by the prospect of the Government walking remorselessly towards about 25 issues of a complex and sometimes highly contentious nature. Some would say it would be better to wait for the Common Market to bring forward its view, or to allow certain ambiguities to continue which industry and industrial property rights owners could not have tolerated.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) made a powerful observation: that at the most conservative estimate about 2·6 per cent. of GDP is in the business of intellectual property; and its exploitation is an equally significant economic activity. He raised a number of interesting points about the need for interventionism, or otherwise, in markets. An example from the business of information shows how liberalism has undoubtedly delivered immense benefits to consumers and protected the

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rights of intellectual property owners. In London there are now about 2,500 companies operating what are called value-added data or network services—they sell information internationally. Until this Government liberalised that market four or five years ago, there were none. So, from a standing start, liberalisation of a market, while protecting the rights of the providers of information, has provided an immense amount of employment and income for the United Kingdom. It is my earnest hope that what we have done will make London into a centre that will match those of New York and Tokyo in the exchange of information, just as those three centres are now world centres of the exchange of financial services and stocks and shares. We believe that intervention in markets is justified only to the extent that it makes them work better.

I hope that hon. Members will have noticed that there is surety and clarity in the majority of issues tackled in the Bill and most of those markets work better where there is such surety and clarity. We are helping the market by providing that long overdue recodification or updating of the law.

The hon. Member for Dagenham mentioned the example of the music industry. Is that industry suffering from an impure or defective market? Is the industry not dynamic? The hon. Gentlemen said that the sales figures of record companies are healthy. We are talking about £400 million worth of overseas earnings. If we introduce a levy, will it help the market to work better or provide compensation to the owners of rights in the original work to the extent that they would be stimulated even further to improve the quality and volume of the products coming on to the market? That is a central question. Certainly the Government would argue that the introduction of a levy would not necessarily introduce a better choice for consumers and would, at best, perhaps be neutral in terms of the amount of work produced by creative people.

I am sure that all Conservative Members will join me in acknowledging the care and professionalism over many years of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) in respect of the issues that we are discussing today. He is, to some extent, the architect of some of the new provisions and I recognise his logic when he argues that we should be careful about the use of terminology. He is correct in saying that, by using literary analogies all the time, we can sometimes cloud the issue, particularly in the high technology, computer and electronics areas. I wish to reassure my right hon. Friend that we shall be vigilant in Committee in the terminology that we use. We shall be particularly vigilant in applying the correct terminology to computer media input and output and we shall not hide behind the blanket phrase, as he fears, or use non-specific language.

I thank the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) for his support on the "must fit" and "must match" question and I hope that he will follow closely the arguments in Committee. As the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) may have surmised from the observations of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, that issue is subject to further discussion and I shall be meeting people in the next fortnight to further those discussions.

I wish to acknowledge the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) to get the Community Trade Marks Office moved to London. He and I are at one in that regard. London is ideally suited to provide the services required of the CTMO and my hon. Friend's long-standing interest and expertise in those matters will be a valuable aid in achieving what we hope will be a favourable result.

En passant, the design right is automatic and does not have to be registered. The designs that must be registered are the non-functional and aesthetic designs.

On the question of the word processor, under "must fit" and "must match", the male and female parts of the plugs which a keyboard would require to connect into a word processor must fit and must match. I believe that I have correctly interpreted the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden. Anyone who simply copied a keyboard would be caught by the usual terms on copying. However, that is a good illustration and one that we should explore in Committee.

I know that the computer industry and one or two other industries feel that they have been left out of the "must fit" and "must match" argument; that it has all been dominated by the motor industry. That is not the case. We have thought the matter through and as we examine the provisions in greater detail we may be able to reassure those hon. Members who are anxious about the white goods industry or indeed the computer industry or lifestyle products that this methodology translate across.

The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) made a charming speech. He has probably had to head north to look after his constituents. I agree with him when he says that this is an overdue restatement and codification of intellectual property. Its timing is about right.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) talked about the balance of interest between the designer and the user. He said that he was looking forward to the Committee stage, from which I assume that he will be serving on the Committee. I look forward to his contributions. Some hon. Members who are unfamiliar with the rich challenges that lie in the Bill see its Committee stage as a parliamentary equivalent of the Gulag. I can assure my hon. Friends that that will not be so. With our hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) in the chair, this will be a stimulating, lively and rewarding Committee on which to serve.

I recognise the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on computer software, with which I shall try to deal in outline form tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made an impassioned plea for the levy. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has a lot to be thankful for in computer software and his Bill has given us many insights into how to go about protecting it. I shall examine his comments on the powers of enforcement in the Bill, which I understand to be one of the central points of his speech.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) who is also anxious about the "must fit" and "must match" provisions. My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs), in whose constituency I opened a compact disc factory a few months ago, is understandably anxious about the levy. I can tell the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that we are looking at the rental right. I shall be discussing that with the Copyright Licensing Agency and I agree with him entirely on the

"must fit" and "must match" question. It is difficult and the route that we have taken so far is a design right route. Despite all the people that we have consulted, we cannot find an alternative way to square the two pressures that he so lucidly described. If he were to shout "Eureka" in Committee on discovering some source of wisdom that we have yet to come across, he will do the Committee a great service.

The blank tape levy has dominated a number of contributions. The Government's position is clear. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster pointed out that there is an element of rough justice. It was interesting to see that not one of the contributions in favour of the levy addressed the question of rough justice. The argument in the main was that there is rough justice in other methods, or any alternative method, but it is correct for my right hon. and learned Friend and I to point out that there would be a number of "innocent" sufferers from the blanket imposition of a levy —a levy which, incidentally, could be marked up in the retail chain with the result that the burden on the consumer would be considerably more, with those in the retail chain standing to gain almost as much as those for whom the levy was intended. It is for that reason, and others, that we are still determined to press the case against the levy being introduced.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend the Minister referred to suffering and burdens. As the levy would be 10p which, as I said, is one third of the price of a cup of coffee in a third class café, it is difficult to imagine that causing any hardship. The average purchaser of blank tapes buys eight a year. He would pay 80p a year, or 1·5p, a week on average.

Mr. Butcher: I remember considering a number of ways to deal with the blind and talking newspapers for the blind. I remember being horrified by the kind of procedures that we would have to adopt to allow blind people to have their levy rebated. Indeed, I was horrified at the paper work that would be involved.

There are different kinds of suffering. We must consider the pure nuisance that would be caused. For the generality of consumers, we must consider the National Consumer Council and the Consumers Association which are absolutely steadfast in their opposition to the levy. Those organisations and the House must judge the interests of the consumer. I must wear a consumer affairs hat. On the balance of the arguments put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, the case for the levy is not proven.

Mr. McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Butcher: I want to press on. This has been an incredibly complex debate and I want to respond to five other issues.

I want briefly to consider the question of design right. Hon. Members have asked whether the new design right proposed in part III of the Bill is the right way to protect designs. We believe that it is. Copyright is quite inappropriate, not least because, it depends on the existence of an original artistic work, such as a design drawing. That is a highly artificial way of protecting industrial products against copying. Some designs would get no protection at all, because for example, they started life as a model rather than a drawing. Similarly, registered designs are not the way to protect the vast number of functional designs produced every year.

The registration system works well for aesthetic designs, but they form a limited class of designs intended mainly for consumer goods. The burden that would be placed on industry and on Government resources if every functional design needing protection had to be registered would be very great.

New laws on unfair competition or unfair copying are another possibility referred to by Opposition Members. They would inevitably give rise to an unacceptable level of uncertainty and we will have to investigate that further. On the other hand, design right has many advantages. It is an automatic right which, like copyright, does not depend on registration. It has none of the disadvantages that copyright protection would inevitably produce if it were applied to industrial products. It provides the necessary degree of certainty which is of great importance to industry. We believe that design right is ideally suited for the task of protecting industrial designs.

With regard to spare parts, it has been said that the "must match" exception goes too far or that it would damage original equipment manufacturers. I do not agree that the provision goes too far just because it will allow copying of entire parts. The point is that in certain important areas of the spare parts market the only way to ensure that consumers enjoy the benefit of competition is to allow that type of copying.

We have ensured that the exception operates only when the part is an integral component of a larger design style, body panels being an obvious example. In that area, the consumer frequently needs to replace the part in question and has no choice but to do so with a part of exactly the same shape and appearance. To give a total monopoly over the supply of these spares to the original equipment designer would not, in the Government's view, be desirable.

I have no doubt that there will be many debates in Committee on the practicalities of the Bill. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said at the beginning of the debate, the Bill has had a long gestation. That long period of consultation and deliberation has been time well spent. The opportunity to revise copyright and design legislation does not occur that often. There have been only two such Acts this century, the Copyright Acts of 1911 and 1956. I detect that the House sees this as a Bill to work on in a non-contentious manner. It is my hope that, in the end, we shall have an excellent Act.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour— *[Mr. Maclean.]*

COPYRIGHT, DESIGNS AND PATENTS BILL *[LORDS] [MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(1) any expenses of the Secretary of State or the Lord Chancellor under the Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

WAYS AND MEANS

COPYRIGHT, DESIGNS AND PATENTS BILL *[LORDS]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the imposition of charges to tax in connection with provisions requiring the deductions of income tax from royalties and other sums paid in respect of the use of designs to persons whose usual place of abode is outside the United Kingdom; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums received by the Secretary of State or the Lord Chancellor by virtue of the Act.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Summer Time

10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Summer Time Order 1988 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 8th March.

The order has been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The purpose of the order is to continue for one further year, that is for 1989, the existing arrangements for the starting and ending dates of summer time. It will mean that, as in previous years, summer time will start on the last Sunday in March—26 March—and end on the Sunday after the fourth Saturday in October—29 October. Both the starting and end times—1 am in each case—conform with the fourth directive on summer time of the European Community. All states in the Community, whatever time zone they are in, begin summer time on the same day, but the United Kingdom and Ireland end summer time about a month after the rest of the Community.

The draft order is uncontroversial, as it simply extends existing arrangements until the end of 1989, but there are other issues of which the House will wish to be aware. Because of continuing suggestions that there are benefits to be gained from a change in our arrangements, we have commissioned a substantive survey on summer time. That was announced on 31 March by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The survey seeks a response to the three options identified in a preliminary survey as being the most favoured.

The options are, first, the maintenance of the status quo, secondly, harmonisation of the ending of summer time with the rest of Europe—with the result that we would lose an hour's evening daylight in October—and, thirdly, the adoption of Greenwich mean time plus one hour in the winter, with Greenwich mean time plus two hours in the summer—which for these purposes means between the end of March and the end of September.

The third option would give us an extra hour of afternoon or evening daylight throughout the year. It would also move us into the same time zone as most other countries in western Europe. As a consequence, we would have a common time with them throughout the year.

Therefore, there are two independent issues to be considered in the consultation exercise. One is whether we should end summer time on the same day as the rest of Europe. The second, and quite separate, question is whether we should move into the central European time zone. The latter question is not a matter on which the Community has expressed a view, but it may have advantages for the United Kingdom. We need time to complete and consider the consultation already put in hand. If we decide to legislate we shall need yet more time. It seems inevitable that we shall require the status quo to be extended beyond 1989.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister has said that we shall need time to legislate. Given the correspondence that the Select Committee has received and the nature of EC legislation, does he agree that it is no longer within the power of the House to legislate on this matter? The necessary legislation will be enacted in Brussels and Strasbourg. Is not that correct?

Mr. Hogg: It depends very much on our ultimate decisions. We may decide that it would be helpful to adopt the third of the various options that I have outlined. That would need domestic legislation. I did not say that we would legislate. I said, "If we decide to legislate" and the emphasis was on the "if". We are consulting and until we have completed the consultation I do not know, nor can anyone know, what the decision will be. As I say, if we decide to legislate we shall need yet more time. It seems inevitable that we shall require the status quo to be extended beyond 1989. We shall discuss this matter with the European Commission.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Minister has said that he will require the present arrangement to be extended by one year. What is the status of the fourth directive? Is the matter not subject to that?

Mr. Hogg: Does my hon. Friend mean the fourth directive or the article?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The fourth directive.

Mr. Hogg: The fourth directive expires at the end of 1989. A further directive will be produced and I expect to see the draft in the middle of the summer. It must be in place by the beginning of next year and that is provided for in the fourth directive. The terms of that directive have not yet been settled, but we should like to see and will press vigorously for an extension of the status quo to achieve the purposes that I have outlined. I have no reason to suppose that the extension will not be forthcoming in the fifth directive.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): If it is the intention or one of the options of the Government to delay this whole business, why did they vote for the fourth directive which says quite clearly:

"The Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt by 1 January 1989 the arrangements to apply from 1990 onwards"?

How does that square with the delaying option that the Minister has described?

Mr. Hogg: The arrangements provide for a derogation, as they provide for a derogation in the fourth directive that we are discussing. The fact that they seek to make provisos for forthcoming years and to achieve harmonisation does not preclude them from making a derogation in the directives, as they have done in the first, second, third and present directives. My view, for what it is worth, is that we shall have little difficulty in securing a further derogation to maintain the status quo for an extended period which will enable us to form a concluded view about the policy that is best suited to the United Kingdom. Then we can set about the negotiations, discussions and persuasion. It is against that background that I seek the agreement of the House for an extension of the present arrangements. That will enable us to pursue the action that I have outlined.

10.9 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): We have two major papers before us—first, the fourth directive, and, secondly, the Summer Time Order 1988, which extends summer time, to which the Minister has referred. The directive defines the start of summer time for all member states for 1989. Additionally, it defines the end of summer time for 1989 for the United Kingdom, Ireland and all member states. This year, the end of summer time will be 29 October 1988 for the United Kingdom and Ireland, and 24 September 1988 for other member states. The Summer Time Order 1988 is mainly concerned with the start and end dates of summer time for 1989. Essentially, the order is about extending the existing summer time arrangements for another year while the matter is sorted out. In addition to that, article 5 of the EEC directive states that the EEC Council

"shall adopt by 1 January 1989 the arrangements, to apply from 1990 onwards."

The Minister talked about his derogations in dealing with the matter. Bearing in mind that the fourth directive was voted on just before Christmas—only a few weeks ago—and bearing in mind that we have a Christmas break, it seems that the matter that was voted on in Brussels is in complete turmoil. It is quite surprising that it has been turned upside down already.

What is the order about? As the Minister's explanatory memorandum states, it is another attempt by the EEC to harmonise summer time for 1990 onwards. The purposes of the harmonisation have been expressed by various EEC documents—certainly those that I have read—in terms of benefits to transport companies. They have mentioned matters such as timetables and the improvement of trade and communications between member states. But there is no mention of matters such as the quality of life, reducing the number of road accidents, crime, or the death of children as they go to and from school. As one is inclined to expect from the EEC these days, the motives are purely to do with the internal market.

Frankly, I am not sure about the benefits of harmonisation. I am not sure that we even need it. Of course we want to improve trade between EEC countries—that is obvious. But the order is about balancing the advantages and disadvantages of harmonisation with the advantages and disadvantages of improving the quality of life. I am talking about ensuring that, when they wake up in the morning, people are not in darkness for long periods. That gets worse further north. People in Scotland—particulary in the northern isles of Scotland—experience more darkness and misery than we experience in the south. Harmonisation must take such matters into account.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will the hon. Gentleman define two points for the benefit of the House? First, what exactly does he mean by the misery that is suffered by those in the north that would come from the harmonisation of summer time? Secondly, will he define in precise terms exactly what advantages acrue to the United Kingdom in economic and other terms by being one of the two odd men out of what is an extremely important piece of legislation for this country?

Mr. Randall: Those statements were based on the review of the earlier experiment between 1968 and 1971 and those documents referred to misery because people lived in darkness for long periods. In that sense, it does affect the quality of life, for instance, of elderly people who have to go out, and for mothers who worry about their children. In terms of the economic argument about which the hon. Gentleman asked, I will answer by putting a question to him. Would he like to quantify the benefits of harmonisation? I understand that it is not clear what the benefits would be, so I do not think that his odd-man-out argument stands up. These things cannot be quantified.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Whether it is a good thing or a bad thing to harmonise summer time within the EEC and whether it would bring advantages or disadvantages, will the hon. Gentleman agree that if Parliament is passing over the right to decide by a majority what summer time would be applied throughout Europe, it would be helpful, convenient and constitutional for the House of Commons to be asked whether it wanted to give that power away?

Mr. Randall: The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has leapt well ahead; I was coming to that very point a little later in my speech. This is the core of this whole debate and it is a matter that concerns me.

This is a highly emotional matter, and we are already beginning to sense this in the debate. Hon. Gentlemen laugh, but if one reads the record of the earlier debates one sees that it was extraordinary how people reacted to this. It is something about which people feel a great deal of concern and which raises a lot of emotion.

I truly believe that in terms of people who live in the north—and I do not have any interests at all there—it is the responsibility of us all, and particularly those who represent constituencies in the south or not all that far north, such as my own, to make sure that the interests of those in Scotland and the northern parts of England are taken into account.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is not the issue that is being discussed tonight considerably more narrow than that discussed on previous occasions? Why is the hon. Gentleman so surprised that the European Economic Community should be concerned with economic issues? Does not common sense suggest that to harmonise the dates on which the clocks are changed would be a considerable advantage to those in business who are importing and exporting and rely on railway and airline timetables?

Mr. Randall: Again, I was going to come on to those points, but I want to take up the Minister's points about the options he has presented tonight. I do not want to talk about the economics because, as I have said, they have not been quantified and there is no way of putting any numbers on them. I accept that in terms of trade there would be some advantages. I am not disputing that. All I am saying is that I believe that in making this decision we have to strike the balance between the economic advantages and some of these other advantages, which we can call social advantages, and the direct effects upon the people concerned.

The Minister has referred to three options. I do not believe that we have three real options. First, he said that there would be the no-change option. Fine, we could take that course. The second is the more complicated option to describe; it is what I call the GMT plus one and the GMT plus two, and it means running summer time during winter and double summer time during summer. That is perhaps a shorthand way of describing it, but I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will appreciate that.

The third option is to harmonise the end of summer time. I do not believe that that is an option, because it would mean that we would end our summer time at the end of September, and that would be the beginning of winter. I believe that there would be absolute outrage in this country if that were to happen. I believe that we are down to two options: the first is to do nothing and the second is complete harmonisation—it is the whole lot, and that is what the EEC is after.

What will happen? The Minister has talked about his review. It is due to be completed by 30 June and people will be asked to submit comments, particularly quantitative, on these options. I am not sure what the results will be. We conducted an experiment between 1968 and 1971 and the conclusion was clear: that people did not want continuous summer time because of the effect of dark mornings. The proposal was thrown out of the House by a massive majority. Therefore, we already have good information about attitudes towards continuous summer time.

I am worried that the survey is being carried out by the Government. What do they hope to do with it? I would not accuse them of dishonesty, but we all know how these things can be fiddled and statistics can be played with. I should like to know how comprehensive the survey is. Who has been receiving these questionnaires? I wonder whether we shall see any dramatic change from the results of the earlier trial.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): To return to the question of the economic benefits, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the economic performance of the United States, which has three or four time zones, does not seem to suffer any bad effects? Does he agree that, however committed to the EEC we are, the Community does not rule the laws of geography?

Mr. Randall: I am inclined to agree with the hon. Gentleman. When I questioned the benefits of harmonisation, that was certainly an issue that came to the forefront of my mind. It is amazing that the United States can cope in this way, yet we in Europe, which is geographically narrower and smaller, seem to encounter greater problems.

Another matter of great anxiety was the point raised by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) which is that this fourth directive, which has been approved by the Government——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Not by Parliament.

Mr. Randall: That is true, but it has been approved by the EEC. The directive was based on article 100A of the treaty of Rome. That means that the decision to adopt a 1 January 1989 deadline for establishing the long-term arrangements, those that will operate after 1990, was achieved by majority voting. We did not have a veto. The Government seem to have surrendered their right of veto which existed under article 100. Why did they do that? I cannot for the life of me understand why. It seems to be an act of folly and madness.

We have only two options: full harmonisation or staying as we are. The EEC wants full harmonisation at all costs, irrespective of the consequences. The Government study will be used as the basis for negotiations with the EEC and, obviously, the outcome is uncertain. Moreover, the Government, for all sorts of highly questionable reasons, have agreed to surrender their power of veto by not insisting on article 100. They have sold Britain down the river. They have caved in to EC bureaucrats' desire to harmonise at any cost to this country and irrespective of the feelings of the British people. I am not sure whether it is a cock-up or whether the Government are being seen off by the EEC.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I think that the hon. Gentleman may have made a mistake which he might like to correct. The European Community's proposals for harmonisation relate to the end date of summer time, and there has been no suggestion at any time that the United Kingdom should move into the central European time zone.

Mr. Randall: With article 100A, we shall be adopting all the conditions that will prevail after 1990. That is the beginning, the end of it and the whole shooting match. It is worrying that the decision will be made on the basis of article 100A. Indeed, I thought that the Minister was going to intervene on that matter. It means that we shall not have a say in the matter. The EC member States will have no desire to take into account the fact that Scotland and the north of England would prefer not to go for full harmonisation. The views of the House and the people of the country will not be considered because the European Community wants full harmonisation by 1990. I should like to know how we are going to stop this. I cannot see how we can get out of it.

The whole thing is set up so neatly that the people of this country will suffer. It is very worrying. The Government have failed miserably to make sure that the interests of our people are taken into account. The benefits of harmonisation are highly questionable, and are being given greater priority than the quality of life of British people. Money, trade and commerce are all that the Government understand.

I should like to ask the Minister whether the Government and the EC are correct constitutionally in adopting article 100A of the treaty of Rome in relation to this matter. The Select Committee on European Legislation, whose Chairman, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), is in his seat tonight, wrote to the Home Secretary asking him why article 100A was adopted in the fourth directive. The Home Secretary said,

"If article 100 has in the past been regarded as the proper vehicle, there will not usually be any real likelihood of successfully arguing that article 100A is an improper treaty base."

That is a remarkable answer. The Home Secretary is saying that, as we have used article 100 in the past, article 100A can be used in future and no questions asked.

This is a complex legal point, and I do not intend to go into it. I am sure that the Minister will know that Mr. Speaker's Counsel has questioned what the Home Secretary has done on this matter. I am sure that my hon. friend the Member for Newham, South will deal with the legal aspects if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I must also ask whether the Minister is satisfied that the Government, in commiting themselves to the majority voting arrangements on summer time, have made a constitutional mistake. I am sure that he will have seen a letter to the Select Committee from Mr. Speaker's Counsel.

For those of us who are unhappy about the use of article 100A, which relates to majority voting, will the Minister tell the House what steps if any can be taken to revert to article 100 when voting on the summer time arrangements that will come into operation in 1990? They will be contained in the fifth directive. I should like the Minister to answer that question because it is of the utmost importance, in particular in relation to precedent. As the fourth directive uses article 100A, must it be used in the next directive?

I believe that the decision to be made by 1 January 1989 regarding long-term summer time arrangements after 1990 should be based on balancing the merits of harmonisation of summer time against the effect that such measures would have on the quality of life for British people, especially in Scotland and the north of England. The important aspects of the quality of life include prevention of road accidents, and other matters that I have referred to. A particular example that came up in the previous debate was of children going to school in the dark in the mornings.

Some interesting research findings have emerged recently from the Policies Studies Institute. They show that there could be fewer deaths and serious accidents if we were to operate summer time—GMT plus one—in the winter. The research was carried out by Dr. Meyer Hillman, who demonstrated that many lives could be saved with continuous summer time, although mornings would be darker. Dr. Hillman claims that under the existing arrangements during the winter months there are twice as many deaths and serious injuries among adults between 4 pm and 7 pm as there are between 7 am and 10 am. In other words, there is a tendency for more deaths, serious injuries and accidents generally in the evening. He added that there are two or three times as many deaths and serious injuries among children between 3 pm and 6 pm as there are between 7 am and 10 am. Dr. Hillman found that darker evenings are a greater killer in Scotland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom and that Scotland could expect to benefit even more from reform of summer time arrangements. Does the Minister accept these figures?

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I make an inquiry because I have not studied the evidence that the hon. Gentleman is citing. Is the analysis that Dr. Hillman has undertaken based predominantly on urban, suburban or rural areas? I imagine that that would make a difference to the findings.

Mr. Randall: I cannot answer the specifics of the hon. Gentleman's question but I am sure that there are hon. Members who can probably comment upon it. I understand that the research was comprehensive. The report shows that the findings would apply to various parts of the country. It was not a pilot study that was carried out in one city. It embraced various parts of the country.

I shall skim through the interim report that was produced by the PSI because I think that it might be of interest to the House. It reveals that some of the benefits included a reduction in the number of fatalities and injuries, a saving in fuel costs, more time for out-door sports, an extension of the tourist season and an opportunity to make all sorts of journeys in daylight. Dr. Hillman observed that journeys in daylight would benefit particularly the more vulnerable groups in the community who are fearful of going out in the dark, especially the elderly. He referred also to schoolchildren, trade with western Europe, a small reduction in burglaries and crime and an improvement in general health and well-being, both physical and mental.

Against these benefits Dr. Hillman lists two disadvantages. The first one is the discomfort and diseconomies of working out of doors in the dark for an extra hour in the morning for people whose jobs require them to make an early start to the day, such as dairy farmers, building

[Mr. Randall]

workers, postmen and milkmen. Secondly, those who live in the northern latitudes of the United Kingdom, especially in Scotland, would be inconvenienced by the later sunrise in winter. The chief problem would be the general shortage of daylight during the heart of winter, whatever its distribution. I thought the House might find that interesting.

It is also interesting to note that the Transport and Road Research Laboratory believes that it would save lives if British standard time were to be reintroduced on the same pattern as we had between 1968 and 1971. I refer the House to *Hansard* of 18 April 1988, column *366*. If we were to go back to the regime of British standard time, the TRRL estimates that the reduction in the number of accident casualties would be 1,340 during the winter. That is a phenomenally large figure and is highly persuasive.

I believe that what is really sticking in the gullets of many Conservative Members is that the Government seem to be aiding and abetting the EEC in introducing harmonised EEC summer time, irrespective of the wishes of the people, by supporting the use of article 100A of the treaty, which allows majority voting. The amendment put down by various Conservative Members demonstrates their disquiet.

It is important to recognise that most EC member states have no incentive to vote against complete harmonisation. They are not interested in the way in which such measures affect the people of Scotland or the north of England. They think only in terms of the internal market. The summer time experiment which took place between 1968 and 1971 was rejected massively by the House because the people did not want it. Ironically this time the Government have passed the powers to Brussels.

10.36 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I should be grateful if the Minister would answer some questions relating to an amendment which some of us put down. I am not sure whether it is being considered. I do not really wish to talk about summer time because I find it difficult to understand the views of hon. Members. When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) was talking about the dangers, he got a rough ride from some of my hon. Friends. As an older Member, I found that strange. I can well remember that when a Labour Government brought in a measure to extend summer time they were attacked unanimously by the Conservative Opposition on the ground that children's lives would be affected and that it would do a great deal of damage. Views on summer time seem to change with circumstances.

The one thing we know is that people feel deeply about summer time. When I was Member of Parliament for a Scottish constituency there was a huge volume of protest when extra summer time was introduced. People care about the issue. Until December it seemed that the House of Commons still had control. We could decide whether we wanted more summer time, less summer time or no summer time.

I hope that the Minister will give us guidance, but what worries me is that it appears that when a decision was made on the fourth directive it was agreed that as from 1990 the Common Market Council, by a majority, could impose a universal time pattern on Europe as a whole. In other words, we in Britain could have a form of summer time which we found unacceptable. Some might think it was a threat to children's lives and some might feel that it was bad for farming or for trade, but it would be imposed on us, whether we liked it or not, irrespective of the views of the Government and of Parliament.

I hope that the Minister will indicate clearly what the score is on the fourth directive. Does article 5 mean that the Council could determine that Parliament was basically irrelevant? Some people say, "They would never do this; they are reasonable people. We are part of the club. We get on very well with them." I counsel caution because unfortunately all the assurances which we have had on these matters in the past have proved to be a sick joke.

I am fed up with hearing about extra trade with Europe when the figures show that, whereas we always had a surplus in trade with Europe before we joined the Common Market, we now have a deficit of £11,000 million. Basically, for every £2 worth of goods we send to Europe, we get £3 worth back. That creates a major problem for the country.

I am fed up with hearing assurances from the Front Bench about the new rebates which we are getting from our contributions and how our contributions are being reduced. As the Government know, this year our net contribution of £1,500 million is the highest in history and, according to the Prime Minister, is likely to rise another £200 million—because of the recent deal.

I am fed up with hearing all the assurances about the changes which are coming for agriculture but which never come, because spending goes up and up. Despite the assurance we had at the time of the European Council meeting that our contribution would be less because we were taking more of the responsibility for food dumping, and the Common Market would spend less, we see in the budget passed last week that the amount that will be spent on dumping and destroying food has risen to £221 million every week.

We should be cautious about giving away parliamentary sovereignty in case we regret it. We must remember that, if we give it away, it will be gone for ever.

Is our reading wrong? Is the explanatory note from the Government wrong? Are the papers rushed out by the Conservative party wrong? They all seem to indicate that as from 1990 the European Council—by a majority—can decide that summer time is applied throughout the Community, and that includes Great Britain. It may all work out splendidly. It may be that we will all decide to have what we want anyway, but, on the other hand, it may not. If we take the decision to give away this sovereignty and throw away our power of veto on something that British people, rightly or wrongly, care deeply about, should we not discuss it in the House of Commons and reach a positive decision?

Hon. Members may say that it does not matter because it has happened. Nevertheless, you will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and some hon. Members who stayed up late on a Thursday night in July two years ago will remember, that when the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office was justifying the Single European Act we were given pledge after pledge that article 100A would not be used to take away rights which had been justified. We questioned him time and again about that. We asked if they would take away powers, and we were told that they would not: article 100A related only to the internal market, to trade and to transport.

We have seen in the 15th report of the Select Committee on European Legislation a carefully argued statement by Mr. Speaker's counsel in which he makes it abundantly clear that it is basically wrong to have this directive done under article 100A. He points out that article 100A is solely on the internal market, and article 100 is appropriate because of the wide nature of these measures.

That is not new. Every directive on summer time has been under article 100, and the only difference, when moving to article 100A, is that we threw away our right of veto if something was unacceptable. Of course, it also gives one more notch, presumably, for those who like to talk about 1992, to say that we have had a harmonising directive.

Mr. Speaker's counsel's advice seems to carry more weight than the Select Committee which has been given some strange advice. The Select Committee gives the impression in its reports of being treated with contempt in this matter, with wrong dates being given and with it being told that something had not been passed, although the European Parliament had discussed it a week ago. The impression is given that the Government are not treating the Select Committee seriously, and that something important has happened without the House of Commons being consulted and without it agreeing.

What can we do tonight? We have a motion, because the amendment has not been selected, just noting the summer time order, which is uncontroversial. That is not the issue. The issue is whether we are giving away a major piece of sovereignty to the European Economic Community.

If this goes through and something new comes in in 1990, people will jump up and down. We saw it happening in this House just now. Labour and Conservative Members are rushing round the House getting people to

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

sign motions about European passports and saying that it is shocking, wrong and anti-British. That is a waste of time because the legislation went through a long time ago and there is nothing that we can do about the European passport.

My fear is that major pieces of sovereignty are being handed over without the House of Commons being directly involved and that devices are being used—quite wrongly—to put matters into article 100A.

First, by using article 100A, did the first directive take away the right of the power of veto? From 1990 onwards, will the Common Market, by a majority, tell us what summer time we have, whether we like it or not? Secondly, is it not fair, in view of all the assurances that were given during the passage of the Single European Act, that the House of Commons should be asked whether it wants to give away that sovereignty?

Thirdly, what was the matter that my hon. Friend the Minister raised in saying that we are going to ask for an extra year by having a derogation? A derogation is a splendid thing if we want it, but what happens if the Council says, "We do not think that you should have a derogation?" Article 5 seems abundantly clear. Why is my hon. Friend so certain that the derogation will happen if he wants it? Is he relying on the good will of his fellow members, and on the fact that they have always been nice guys before? Under article 100 and article 5 of the fourth directive, it seems that if the Council does not want to give us derogation we simply will not get one.

I have a feeling that not just in this area but in many areas the House of Commons is surrendering substantial sovereignty in such a way that people will later say that a mistake was made. However, it may well be the right decision. It may well be right to let the Common Market decide what summer time applies. However, the important thing is that people should be consulted and that they should be told what is happening.

It is unfortunate that we are discussing a non-controversial order, along with Community papers, when most of our colleagues do not have the slightest idea about what is happening or about what the papers involve. It is very important that people should be told what is happening when a major decision is being made on sovereignty, and that they do not wake up later and regret it.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister not to underestimate the strength of feeling on this issue. It may be nonsense and people may be getting upset about summer time for no good reason, but I assure him, as Scottish hon. Members will, that people feel deeply about it because they believe that it involves safety and many other things. If we are passing over such a power, people should be consulted.

Those are my questions, which I hope that the Minister will bear in mind in view of the assurances given to the House of Commons on 10 July when the Single European Act was discussed.

Finally—this is an important point—if the Government take the view, as Mr. Speaker's counsel does, that it is wrong to promote the fourth directive under article 100A, is there anything that they can or that they are willing to do about that?

European constitutions are complicated and it seems to me that, ultimately, if the Commission proposes something under a particular provision, hon. Members can talk about it—but can they do anything about it? I hope that the Government will do something about it and that it will be possible to reach an agreement. We should safeguard ourselves against the majority of the Council imposing on us something that we do not want. I should like to retain article 100. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that if we simply say that, because it is article 100, article 100A applies, almost any directive on any issue could go through the Common Market under article 100A and we would lose any control or power over it.

Something rather significant has happened and I hope that the Government can give us an assurance that we shall retain some sovereignty apart from the right to argue from what might be a hopeless position.

10.49 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I echo the hopes of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), but I am not so sure that the Government are in a position to give the assurance that he sought. Perhaps the people in the Common Market will give us another year, or a semi-permanent derogation year on year, as has happened on a number of other issues, but that is not necessarily the position in law.

We are concerned with the position in law in this semi-legislative Chamber. I say that because the House now has no option in this matter; nor have the Government. As the hon. Member for Southend, East said, the matter is now, for the time being at least, being dealt with under article 100A, whereby a qualified majority carries the day.

I was disappointed with the Minister's speech. I know that he has been busy recently. He has been often at the Dispatch Box, and no doubt doing many other things, apart from his constituency duties. That may be one of the reasons for his brief and incomplete speech. The Select Committee, however, has produced two reports on this subject, and there has been correspondence between me, as its chairman, and the Minister, but none of that was mentioned by him. Of course, he had every right not to mention it, but there was about his speech an aura of hoping that someone would not be here tonight. It is not good enough. I am sorry to have to say that. My explanation—charitable perhaps—is that the Minister and his Department have had a great deal to do——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I like to be brief.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps, but not to the point of being incomplete.

Mr. Hogg: I have a great preference for being brief. With the leave of the House, I shall have an opportunity to answer points that have been raised. It seems best to proceed in that way, so that I can reply to any points that the hon. Gentleman may wish to make.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister, but he has not quite got the point. It is the Select Committee and not I that has put out two reports on this issue. The Minister did not mention them. Whitehall, perhaps because it lacks the power, is not taking notice of the Select Committees of the House in the way it should. What follows will justify that remark.

The attention of the Select Committee was first drawn to this matter at its meeting on 9 December 1987 when it

had before it a memorandum, dated 3 December and signed by Lord Caithness, and the EEC document in question—9584/87, the fourth Council directive on summer time arrangements. I want to read out what the noble Lord said, so that that can be compared in *Hansard* with what the Minister said:

"Although there is growing support for a change to summer time arrangements in this country, a one year extension of the present system, as the Commission now proposes will enable us to commission and complete a major review of summer time arrangements, which will inform our position on negotiations for a long term agreement for 1990 onwards."

That expresses the position more accurately than the Minister did. Would he agree with that?

My second question is: why did we receive this document after the decision had been made in Brussels? Sometimes, in price negotiations and so on, that is necessary and understood, but why did not the Select Committee get this document in time? It was dated Brussels, 11 November 1987

Our second report, HC43xv, dated 17 February 1988, states that the Committee learned that the directive was adopted by the Council not on 7 December, as we had thought, but on 22 December. The report says:

"The Home Secretary has now explained that it was not until 27 November 1987 that a firm proposal was received. The Committee notes that the European Parliament delivered its opinion on the Commission's proposals on 20 November 1987".

That shows the discrepancy between the dates, so there was a delay in the first instance.

I wrote to the Home Secretary about the discrepancy between the dates and the matter has still not been entirely cleared up. The matter now appears to be out of the hands of the House, but the Scrutiny Committee did not receive the document until after the decision had been made. There had to be a debate on the order, but it was impossible for the House to debate the matter prior to the decision.

Article 100 has been part of the treaty of Rome since its inception and enables the Commission to make proposals for the extension of the Common Market in matters which are not provided for within the terms of the treaty and, as has been frequently stated tonight, that must be done by unanimity.

Article 100A, introduced as part of the Single European Act, which was taken through the House very quickly under a vicious guillotine, introduces another provision under which, for purposes of the internal market—note the different wording—it is possible for the Council to take a decision by qualified majority which shall be binding on all members.

That provision is capable of qualified majority and all the matters relating to the internal market are also sent round the new circuit of the European legislative round via Strasbourg. In that process, the European Parliament can, provided that it obtains a majority and the Commission agrees, modify such regulations. In other words, legislation under article 100A can attract, and often now does so, amendments from the European Parliament which takes the position of the Council. If it obtains a majority and if it so wishes, it can move amendments directly, and, if the Commission agrees and the decision is not reversed by the Council, it makes the law applicable to this land.

Other than the negotiation powers to which Lord Caithness referred in the memorandum—that is all the Government have, apart from their vote—the House has virtually no direct part in such a legislative process. No doubt the Minister will question what I have said if I have misinterpreted the issue. Although it is a complex and arcane matter, it is important to the House and the country and I have explained it as well as I can.

The choice between whether legislation should be promulgated under article 100 or article 100A does not lie with the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) quite properly asked why the Government accepted it. As I understand it, the Commission decides on which article of the treaty it shall base its regulations. This is literally foreign territory in legislative terms. The House can legislate and we do not think in terms of legislation being restricted by a constitution, although our legislation is now in European terms.

The European Commission, no doubt believing that this was primarily a matter of the internal market and of transport and business, said that it would use article 100A, but, as everyone in this country will say and as my hon. Friend said, this is a social matter and a matter of opinion, rather than a matter relating to economic issues alone. The analogy with the United States shows that clearly.

Therefore, the choice of article is of crucial importance. Had the Commission continued to use article 100, it would have required unanimity and the whole question of "negotiations" and the Government's position would have been relatively clear. I say "relatively" because they would no doubt have been under pressure, but still the Minister would have been justified in saying that we would probably get a derogation. He could have said that under article 100 we have in effect what he claims is a veto, even if Lord Cockfield would not call it that.

Therefore, we are left with the position that the Government have already agreed. Will the Minister tell us whether, when the matter came to the Council on whichever date it was, the Government voted against it, for it or abstained? The House has a right to know which of those three actions or non-actions the Government took.

The European Council legislates in secret—another great difference between ourselves and that body. The Minister should tell us how he voted. If he did not vote against it, we have no grounds of future objection to article 100A being continually used. Article 5 of the fourth directive says that the unanimity rule for summer time is likely to apply from 1990 onwards. So we appear to have missed out all the way along. Even if the Government did vote against it, there is still nothing that can stop it, other than an appeal to the European Court. We do not know what the European Court would say, but if it were asked to say that article 100A was ultra vires and it should be article 100, it could still come down on article 100A in view of the preamble to the Single European Act which it would probably use in justification.

Finally, I turn to the important annex B to the Select Committee's report written by Mr. Speaker's counsel. It is important enough to conclude my remarks by reading what he said:

"The Committee is aware that Article 100A is going to give rise to many questions of interpretation, both before and after adoption of measures based on it. The present case gives an opportunity to consider a particular question of the first importance: precisely what measures does Article 100A allow?

The relevant passage reads:"—

[Mr. Spearing]

this is from the Single European Act—

> "'The Council shall . . . adopt the measures for the approximation of the provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States which have as their object the establishment and functioning of the internal market.'
>
> The internal market is the area without internal frontiers described in Article 8A.
>
> The syntax is not as clear or as elegant as we would expect from, say, our own Parliamentary Counsel; but the long and complex exchanges leading to the Single European Act in general, and Article 100A in particular, militated against good drafting.
>
> Having regard to the patent intention, and after comparing the language of Article 100 (from which Article 100A departs significantly), I offer the Committee this as the true interpretation.
>
> Article 100A empowers adoption of measuress which have as their object the establishment and functioning of the internal market. Such measure must approximate relevant national provisions.
>
> The papers on summer time show an attempt to read the passage from Article 100A quoted above as if the words 'which have as their object' qualify not the Council's measures but the national provisions. I select just one of several reasons for believing that this is wrong: how could there be any national provisions (certainly in an unharmonised field) which have as their object the establishment or functioning of the internal market (as newly identified by the Single Act)?"

That seems to me a conclusive argument why article 100A is not suitable for this particular measure, irrespective of its content, and I invite the Minister to tell us why the Home Office did not put our people in Brussels on guard on that. Surely that was something to which they could have recourse instead of having apparently sold the pass on this matter.

The quotation concludes:

> "Also, the proposition is advanced that if Article 100 has in the past been used for any purpose, then Article 100A should now be available. This seems logically unsound. Article 100 is directed to the common market—a concept to be interpreted widely in the light of Articles 2 and 3. Article 100A is directed to the narrower concept of the internal market. On the reading I offer, the true question of law on the present case is this: can the measure on summer time validly be said to have as its object the establishment or functioning of the internal market?"

I have quoted at length because the House will be invited to comment on further legislation based on article 100A. The Council of Ministers and perhaps the Minister or his colleagues will also be invited in the Council of Ministers to consider legislation under article 100A which the Minister, his colleagues or others might think should be determined under article 100 or some other article of the treaty.

If the persistence with article 100A continues, not only will there be legislative diktat by a qualified majority in Brussels, but there will be direct intervention, by a direct amendment, by an elected body other than this House. That legislation will be applicable in law in the United Kingdom. That has a major constitutional importance. With regard to article 100A, although we have not tampered with the Mace tonight, metaphorically by their actions the Government may have sent it to Brussels—if not direct, certainly by air freight and certainly labelled, "By courtesy of the Home Office."

11.5 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I want to contribute briefly to the debate. However, my brevity on this occasion should not be taken as a sign of the lack of importance attached to the issue in my part of the country—indeed, the opposite is the case. My brevity is more a reflection of the lateness of the hour and the fact that at least one other hon. Member, if not more, wants to contribute to the debate.

William Lyon Mackenzie King, when he was Prime Minister of Canada, once remarked ruefully that the problem with that country was that it had too much geography and not enough history. The problem, if any, with the Highlands and Islands of Scotland is that, of course, we have more than our fair share of both. We certainly have more than our fair share of geography and history in a United Kingdom context and we have more than our fair share of geography within a European Community context. I want to address my few remarks tonight less to the mechanics of the issue within Europe and the Commission, to which previous speakers have referred, and more to the matter at hand—the merit of the issue.

We can be forgiven, as an earlier speaker remarked, for feeling a degree of confusion as is so often the case with measures, drafts and directives of this type that come from Brussels. The Home Office issued a press notice on 31 March the purpose of which was to invite people to respond and participate in the consultative process. It tries to set out the parameters of what we are discussing tonight. It refers to the fact that there are three options under consideration:

> "There are the continuation of the present position; the harmonisation of the date for ending summer time to bring it into line with the rest of the Community; or the introduction of Greenwich Mean Time plus one hour in the winter, with Greenwich Mean Time plus two hours from the end of March to the end of September. The last option would mean that the United Kingdom would be in the same time zone as EC countries except Greece and Portugal throughout the whole year."

I am sure that that clarifies the issues substantially for all hon. Members present at this time of night. I tend to feel that when we are discussing that type of proposal with that degree of complexity, rather like the Greeks, we are in danger of losing our marbles by approaching it in that way.

In a pragmatic sense, there are two broad aspects of concern for anyone in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, in the north of Scotland or, indeed, in Scotland as a whole with regard to the proposal to change the clock.

The first refers to the agricultural community. When summer time was changed between 1968-71, on an experimental basis, it caused considerable difficulty to the agricultural community. I need hardly bring to the attention of the House the fact that, given the climatic variations, the harvest comes later in the Highlands and Islands area than it does in the more favourable climatic environs of the south of England. The agricultural community in the Highlands and Islands would regret the loss of an hour's daylight for harvesting. The farmers would wish their opposition to it to be recorded tonight.

Equally, the more general loss as a result of the moving of the clock and the loss of the daylight time in the morning would cause the agricultural community hardship and difficulty. That is as true of my part of the country as of other parts of Scotland.

Another problem with either of the options, rather than the status quo, is the position of schoolchildren. Just as the agricultural community would have more darkness in the

morning to contend with, so would children going to school. That would affect the safety of children in the north of Scotland, and I hope that that point is not lost on the Government.

Mr. Wallace: Like me, my hon. Friend was one of those children who had to travel in the dark in the morning as a result of the experimental change in 1968-71. I found it unsettling. Is it not also true that, at certain times of the year, children travelling in the dark in the morning have to contend with ice, which is not always the case in the later part of the afternoon?

Mr. Kennedy: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. Again, for climatic reasons, the occurrence of ice is that much greater in the north of the Highlands and Islands, and it adds further danger to the children's journeys. Like him, I was one of that lost generation in the darkness of 1968-71. I am sure that some of our political critics will say that neither my hon. Friend nor I have found our way back yet, but we live in hope.

Mr. Wallace: We saw the light.

Mr. Kennedy: We did indeed, and it was the northern lights. I would hate to see the lights going out all over Lerwick, in my hon. Friend's constituency, as a result of this measure being implemented.

I have three other arguments against the change in the status quo. First, there is no reason for Britain to be at a disadvantage in being one hour out of step with the rest of the Community at certain times of the year. If the United States can operate on five different time zones, and if the Soviet Union can operate on 11 different time zones—that will not change under glasnost—there is no reason why one hour's difference should cause us anxiety.

Secondly, the geographical division in Britain is not simply between the north and the south but between the north-west and the south-east. I hope that when considering this matter Ministers will bear that important consideration in mind.

Thirdly, although I am not politically a nationalist, as a Scot, I am nationalistic. Had this debate been taking place north of the border, some of the attitudes—I do not accuse the Minister of this, although it is true of the broad debate both inside and outside the House—that are too easily assumed would be different, because people would know the reality of the position.

I shall end by quoting a curious source to pray in aid, none other than Lord Bruce-Gardyne. Writing in *The Daily Telegraph* the day before the matter was debated some years ago, he said:

"For the majority of the population BST is a matter of indifference shading into marginal convenience. For the minority—the Scots, the country-dwellers in the north of England, the builders and the civil engineering contractors, the postmen and the farmers—it is a misery and a curse. It requires an effort of imagination for the London commuter who enjoys being bullied by his wife to go and dig the garden when he returns of a winter evening from his office to realise what it means to be a glen farmer . . ."—

I am not sure what he means by a glen farmer; I think that he means a farmer in a glen—

"in my constituency to have to send his small children off on the long journey to school an hour and a half before dawn."

I endorse the sentiment in that article, as I am sure does my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I speak in a personal capacity, because for geographical reasons this issue divides friends in a way that politics very often does not. I hope that the Government will stick to the status quo, because it is workable, manageable and sensible and for one hour we can dare to be different from our European Community partners without threatening 1992 and the greater cause of political integration.

11.16 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): It would be a shame if the debate was smothered between the views of the Europhiliacs and the Europhobics, because the issue is far more important. Indeed, it is far more useful for us to separate the two issues and examine the case for extended daylight without the burdens of feeling about Europe and the resentment about another Parliament or institution making our decisions for us.

We all agree that the issue must be decided by a free vote of the House. The decision in 1972 to reject the experiment was by a massive majority. Unfortunately, I was not in the House at that time, but hon. Members who were will remember that there was strong public reaction to the experiment and that it was not based on scientific, objective or reasoned analysis. There was strong emotional reaction by the public, especially to an incident a few days before the House voted on the issue. There was a campaign by the tabloid press which published photographs of children wearing armbands and feeling their way along dark country lanes.

Since the vote, which was taken on entirely the wrong basis, there has been a chance to look coolly and objectively at the issue. The weakest reason for changing to extended daylight, to an extra hour, to British standard time and double British summer time, is harmonisation. A person who leaves Brussels airport at 17.45 will arrive at Heathrow at 17.45 and that is confusing. Those who have experience of doing business with the continent raise the serious objection that when they telephone people on the continent they find that they have not arrived or have gone home.

There are powerful arguments in the preliminary report by Dr. Meyer Hillman who says that the great advantage, especially for the young and the old, is in the extended use of leisure facilities in the evenings. Attendance at pensioners' clubs, boys' clubs and clubs for young people always falls off when we lose the extra hour of daylight at the time when we need it most.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) spoke about the opposition of farmers. However, at least one branch of the National Farmers Union has voted its approval for extended daylight. It is the NFU in the county of Avon. The most powerful reason was proved by a three-year experiment conducted by the Transport and Road Research laboratory. It was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). The firm analysis is a reduction of 580 in the number of fatal and other serious road accidents in a year. Dr. Hillman's final report, which will be released in a few weeks, will firm up that figure. We know that there is a relationship between the number of accidents and mornings and evenings. The ratio is about 4:1. We are talking about a massive saving in human life and human suffering. The Scottish figures show an even more dramatic saving.

I appeal to hon. Members to keep an open mind on the issue. Let us look at the evidence that will come out—it

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

will be with us in a few weeks—and not mix it up with the European issue of who is finally to make the decision. Let us emerge from the debate when the decision is taken as friends of the light and enemies of the darkness.

11.20 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am in considerable agreement with what the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) has said. He said that we should approach the evidence in an entirely empirical way. That seems to me to be wholly sound. The hon. Gentleman said also that we should not allow our judgments to be clouded by, for example, prejudice that we may harbour in respect of the Community.

Several hon. Members asked me questions. I shall try to reply to them in the few moments remaining to me. First, I was asked by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), the Chairman of the Select Committee, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) whether, in my view, article 100A is the correct article. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) said, this is a complex legal subject. Therefore, I do not propose to express a concluded view on the issue, if only because I do not think that I am competent to do so. Moreover, I am conscious, as hon. Members have suggested, that the decision on that issue spans several Departments and interests.

First, I am not irrevocably persuaded that article 100A applies to the directive. Clearly, that matter requires further consideration. I most certainly do not concede that the directive is intra vires article 100A. Secondly, the fact that, on this occasion, we raised no objection to the treaty base of the directive—agreeing as we did with the policy included in the directive—does not in any way preclude us from raising an appropriate objection on subsequent occasions and in the context of subsequent directives.

I have been asked—most notably by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East—how we could challenge the vires of the directive and the article if we so choose. Initially, the matter is for the Commission. If the Commission is not prepared to amend a directive, of course, the Council can. But the Council can make that amendment only if it is unanimous. If the Council is not unanimous, the proceedings can be challenged only by way of procedure in the court. That is the precise answer to the question.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, West and for Newport, West, asked whether the extension of summer time throughout the year is likely to result in a reduction in road deaths and casualties. The answer is that on the best available evidence it will lead to such a reduction. Chapter 8, page 64 of the review of British standard time published in October 1970 states:

"There is little doubt that British Standard Time has led to an overall improvement in road accident casualties although the crude figures of savings of casualties need to be treated with some reserve. The overall improvement seems to have been even greater in Scotland than in England and Wales."

That sentiment no doubt lies behind the campaign currently being mounted by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents in support of a campaign for the adoption of British standard time, which is summer time throughout the year.

If that be true of standard time, or British summer time throughout the year, as I believe it to be, obviously it is true of double summer time, that is summer time in winter and double summer time in summer. It may be even truer in respect of summer time in winter and double summer time in summer. So we must not mislead ourselves on this one fact. Probably a change of the kind that we have been discussing would lead to a reduction in road casualties. I am not pretending for a moment that that is conclusive, but we need to focus on that as a probable fact.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked, properly, whether from 1990 onwards the EC, by relying on article 100A, would have the power to impose on us a kind of harmonisation to which we would object. First, I have not conceded and do not concede that article 100A necessarily is the proper treaty base for the directive. If article 100 is the appropriate treaty base for the directive, the veto applies. Secondly, even if article 100A is the appropriate treaty base for the directive, I do not think that the House should be too pessimistic.

First, there is absolutely no reason to suppose that the Community would seek to impose as from 1990 an immediate harmonisation, because the terms contained in article 5 of the fourth directive are matched in article 5 of both the second and third directives, and derogations were thereafter extended. Secondly, do not forget that we are dealing with qualified majorities, not with absolute majorities. Thirdly, if it is true, as I think it is, that the preservation of our summer time ending date results in a saving of life, I should be surprised if Community countries would be willing or anxious to impose on us harmonisation of the ending date of summer time in the knowledge that that would inevitably result in an increase in road casualties. I do not feel nearly as pessimistic as some hon. Members, even if, which I do not concede, article 100A is the appropriate treaty base for the directive.

There may have been some misunderstandings on the part of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West and I make no criticism. When we were dealing with harmonisation in this context, the only harmonisation that is being contemplated is the harmonisation of the end dates for summer time. From time to time in the debate it appears to have been implied that the purpose of the Community is to achieve a common time zone throughout the Community. That is not the purpose of the Community. It has never been so expressed, although, as I have already said, one of the options we shall consider is the adoption of a time regime that will bring our time regime into accordance with central Europe time scales.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Summer Time Order 1988 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 8th March.

To be presented by Privy Councillors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

AGRICULTURE

That the draft Meat and Livestock Commission Levy (Variation) Scheme (Confirmation) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

DEFENCE

Ordered,

That Mr. John Evans be discharged from the Defence Committee and Mr. John McFall be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

HOME AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Mike Woodcock be added to the Home Affairs Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. Jack Aspinwall be added to the Transport Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Holyhead (Government Agencies)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I am grateful to the Minister for being here to reply to the debate and for the opportunity to bring to the House's attention some important issues affecting Holyhead. It is the largest town in my constituency, where unemployment, currently at over 20 per cent., is unacceptably high.

I have discovered that Holyhead has occupied a great deal of the House's time over the years. A Select Committee in 1808 considered improvements to the harbour. Two years later an Act of Parliament was passed to give effect to its recommendations. In 1819 a further Act was necessary to enable Telford to complete his suspension bridge, and build the A5 through to Holyhead. Various Government inquiries and Select Committees considered the need for a railway linking Chester and Holyhead. That led to another Act of Parliament in July 1844.

That draws me to the simple but unavoidable conclusion that good communications are vital for a healthy economy. In the last century there was a battle royal between Porthdinllaen and Holyhead for the Irish traffic. To quote a recent publication, the contest was really decided when Telford succeeded in bridging the Menai Straits in 1859.

Thus, good road and rail communications have been, and continue to be, vital to Holyhead. But the era of Telford and Stephenson, however glorious, is now over. We must look for improvements and ask the Government and British Rail for the same level of commitment and investment as their predecessors produced.

I was informed only a matter of days ago that British Rail is firmly committed to the north Wales line through to Holyhead, I welcome that statement. However, the constant delay in the completion of the station complex is a source of much anger in the town. When the old Station hotel was pulled down some years ago assurances were given by the parties concerned—British Rail, Sealink, then a British Rail subsidiary, and the local authority—that a new station complex costing over £4 million would be built. Indeed, one of my predecessors, Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos, told me this week that he was given that assurance in 1979. The current plan is more modest, and is believed to cost £2·5 million.

In the intervening years, delay has followed delay, promises have been broken, and the site of the old Station hotel is an eyesore. It is the first sight of Wales that the ferry passenger travelling from Ireland sees, and it is a disgrace.

The local authority, Ynys Môn borough council, has put in a great deal of effort and should be congratulated on its determination. We were told at a recent meeting of the Holyhead Port Users Association that the deal was near completion but that there would be another slight delay. One member of the association was moved to say:

"That is what I was told exactly eight years ago."

We must now exert all possible pressure on British Rail to conclude the deal. It will mean so much for the image and morale of the people of Holyhead.

I thank the Minister for receiving a deputation recently which pressed for improvements to the A5 through the island. We were grateful for his announcement that he was

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

considering the inclusion of the dualling of the A5 to Turnpike Nant near Llangefni in the publication "Roads in Wales 1988." With improvements to the A55 under way, that will improve access to the port.

We were also pleased that the Minister is to have, in his words, "another long hard look" at proposals to deal with the remainder of the A5 through to Holyhead. The expected increase in the volume of heavy commercial traffic from the current level of 37,000 to nearly 100,000 units per annum will place an intolerable burden on Holyhead and the surrounding communities.

The Welsh Development Agency has a vital role to play in developing Holyhead's true potential. It must capitalise on the fact that the Holyhead-Dun Laoghaire route is the shortest sea crossing between Ireland and the United Kingdom. That is a vital factor in these days of fast communications. Ferry operators are now keen to exploit short sea crossings, not only because of the fuel costs involved but because sea travel is more time consuming than land travel by a constant factor of three to one, which gives Holyhead a distinct advantage.

I should like to see the Welsh Development Agency working with industrialists and employers to regenerate the town's economy. Recent developments give me cause for optimism that we could be on the move. These involve projects in the fishing industry, in which the local borough council and the Welsh Development Agency have been active.

I should also like to see drawn up a plan of action with further initiatives to create jobs in sufficient numbers to tackle the underlying problem of the long-term unemployed. I am confident that the Welsh Development Agency, working alongside and in partnership with industry, and on occasion with the local authority, could transform the town's prospects and create prosperity. WDA officers are considering establishing an enterprise company in the area. That is one way to start to tackle our problems.

Tourism is, and will increasingly be, an important industry for Holyhead. The Wales tourist board has recognised the potential and has chosen the town for the site of a permanent regional tourist information office. The staff who run the current temporary office from a caravan have done extremely well under difficult conditions. With over 1 million people travelling annually through Holyhead, the great potential must be realised.

There is also the possibility of running steam trains along the north Wales line during the peak summer period. I understand that the original stumbling block—the lack of a turntable facility at Holyhead—has been overcome. Now that that has been resolved, I hope that the Wales tourist board and BR can between them solve any scheduling difficulties.

I congratulate BR on improving its catering facilities and time schedules, particularly on inter-city trains. However, the quality of the rolling stock could be substantially improved, and such an improvement would be greatly welcome by all, including the Minister, who travel regularly on this route.

Holyhead is a unique community in many ways. It is the most cosmopolitan town in north Wales for its size, and that is due to its seafaring tradition. It is also a close community. It has been bound together by the constant danger that men and women face at sea. Many families are constantly aware of the fate that can befall their loved ones by working in an unpredictable environment. These harsh realities have evolved a caring and compassionate community. They have faced economic and sometimes social difficulties with fortitude and I believe that the Government, through their agencies, owe it to them to maintain and develop the skills and crafts that have taken generations to evolve.

I am realistic enough to know that any project must be viable if it is to succeed. I know that the omens are good. We must capture the opportunities that are clearly available with better communications, the advent of the Channel tunnel and the town's strategic and pivotal location as Ireland's gateway to England. The A55 and A5 are part of a designated Euroroute. I am prepared to play my role in bringing about this exciting prospect, and I hope that the Government will respond in equal measure.

11.41 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): As someone who was born and bred in Ynys Môn, I am naturally anxious to see it prosper. I continue to visit the island and am well aware of its problems and opportunities. Indeed, I was there last Friday. I hope to show the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) that Government agencies have not been inactive in assisting development at Holyhead.

Holyhead is primarily a ferry port. The multi-purpose roll-on/roll-off ferry service that was initiated by the British Railways Board is now in its 22nd year of operation and the lift-on/lift-off container service for Freightliners is in its 17th year.

There was overall traffic growth over the eight years to 1985 for passengers, passenger vehicles and freight moving through Holyhead. However, the growth stopped in 1986. The port is definitely facing competition from air services, influenced by price deregulation, and the troubles in Ireland have not helped.

However, the consultants' report on Ynys Môn concludes that ro/ro ferry prospects are secure in both the short and long term and that the prospects of securing further development in conjunction with the provision of facilities for Channel tunnel traffic appear good.

Improvements to the ferry and rail terminal will provide new passenger facilities, including a new concourse, car parking, a ticket office and a link bridge to a tourist information centre. Earlier this year, B and I introduced an additional daily service from Holyhead and there are now two daily round trips to and from Dublin. Sealink also operates two daily round trips to and from Dun Laoghaire. A new modern fishing harbour is being provided by Anglesey borough council by infilling an existing dry dock and reclaiming land in an area of high dereliction. Work that will cost about £1 million is well advanced and is expected to be completed this summer.

In addition to nearly £200,000 from the Welsh Development Agency, the Welsh Office is contributing over £300,000 in the form of a fishing harbour grant and an urban aid grant. An application for European regional development fund aid for both developments is expected by the end of the year.

I am glad to say that fish landings have doubled in the period 1979-87.

The hon. Gentleman was right to emphasise the north Wales coast railway line. BR hopes to boost business in the off-peak season by slashing one third off all fares on its hourly services into Chester. The campaign, which ends on 31 May, was publicised in a mail drop into households and advertisements in the press. A further campaign will be considered after the summer season ends.

InterCity services out of Holyhead to London are being increased from six trains to eight in peak summer. These services coincide with boat services in and out of Holyhead. BR says there is no question of running down the line.

Clwyd county council has applied on behalf of Gwynedd, Cheshire and itself for ERDF aid of 50 per cent. of the cost of a feasibility study which it hopes will demonstrate to BR that a case exists for electrifying the Holyhead-Crewe line. BR itself has agreed to co-operate in an advisory capacity with the study. At present the application is still being considered by the European Commission. Of course, at the end of the day, electrification and other investment decisions are matters for BR.

The hon. Gentleman and I discussed the A5 trunk road in Anglesey when he led a deputation from Gwynedd to see me on 13 April. I am well aware of local concern to develop the economy in Anglesey, especially Holyhead, and the desire to develop and improve the A5 trunk road particularly between Llanfair PG and Holyhead. I explained to the deputation and the hon. Member that the Department is looking carefully at schemes to improve the A5 on the island. My Department is, as he said, giving particular consideration to possible dualling between Llanfair PG and Turnpike Nant junction, the turn-off point for Llangefni. Our proposals will be made known when "Roads in Wales 1988" is published.

I must reiterate that the economic case for many of the other proposed schemes is very poor, but we will consider any new evidence of economic benefit to Holyhead from the increased traffic flows.

The application for urban development grant for retail development in Holyhead, which would include improving the A5 at its junction with Kingsland road, is currently being appraised by the Department. It is too soon to indicate the outcome of the appraisal.

The hon. Gentleman referred to unemployment. I am aware of the position. I am glad to say that unemployment in the Holyhead travel-to-work area has fallen by 4·5 percentage points since September 1986 and by 2·3 percentage points over the year to March 1988. Of course, there is still much more to be done, but the trends are in the right direction.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that some of the welcome fall in unemployment has been due to the activity of the Welsh Development Agency and other agencies. The WDA is engaged in a series of measures designed to create the right climate for industrial and economic growth in Holyhead and Anglesey as a whole.

On the property side, the agency plans to build 13 factory units totalling 28,000 sq ft in Ynys Môn; seven of these are to be built in Holyhead. The agency is already dealing with a steady stream of inquiries from companies keenly interested in setting up on the island.

The WDA is funding a number of important schemes to bring land back into productive use under its land reclamation programme. In partnership with the local authorities, it is grant-aiding dredging works at Holyhead harbour designed to improve facilities for shipping movements at the port. It is also engaged in preservation and renovation works at the former Bon Sauveur convent in Holyhead as part of a planned housing development.

The WDA is seeking opportunities to increase its venture capital activity on the island and is currently processing inquiries received from nine firms seeking investment finance of nearly £300,000. Three of these are from firms in Holyhead.

Over the past three years, offers of regional assistance to firms in Holyhead have totalled £2·7 million, with forecasts of creating over 900 new jobs.

As to the future, the WDA is represented on the Holyhead study group, whose remit is to work out long-term plans for the development of Holyhead. The agency is working closely with the Wales tourist board and county and borough councils, and it has commissioned a study to look at the development prospects of the area. The study's findings have been considered and discussed with interested organisations, including the Holyhead Port Users Association. Several of the study's recommendations are now being explored in more depth.

The Wales tourist board is also keen to see development at Holyhead. A number of potential redevelopment projects concerning shopping and environmental improvements, which will assist tourism development, are under consideration.

The WTB also provided support in recent years through joint marketing campaigns and over the three years since 1986-87 the board will have supported total advertising expenditure of £150,000. I am sure that the board would be interested in discussing any proposals that the hon. Gentleman might wish to make to it.

Bringing together the various tourism associations which exist within Anglesey is obviously important. The Ynys Môn borough council has already made significant strides in that respect and, with WTB support, has evolved the joint marketing scheme, which now produces a single brochure for the island as a whole. I congratulate it as I understand that the scheme has done particularly well this year.

In that context, the exhibition of Holyhead in the 1990s, opened yesterday in the town library by the chairman of Gwynedd county council, will be a useful pointer to residents and visitors alike. I understand that the exhibition again demonstrates the co-operation between various agencies and the local authorities.

Because we have been very conscious of the needs of Holyhead, we in the Welsh Office have, in recent years, sought to concentrate, as far as possible, the available urban programme resources for the island on the port of Holyhead. Indeed, since 1984-85 almost £800,000 of urban programme allocations have been specifically directed towards Holyhead. I would expect that concentration to continue in future years provided, of course, that the local authorities continue to submit worthwhile applications to the Department.

In the case of the Holyhead leisure centre, our decision for this year took into account the creamery closure at Llangefni, and we felt priority had to be given to the workshop units there with their job-creating potential. All parts of Wales benefit from WTB activities. An additional £250,000 was made available to the tourist board for marketing in early 1988. Since 1983-84 net Government funding of the Wales tourist board has increased by over 90 per cent., with assistance to projects increasing over

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threefold. This year, 1988-89, assistance is at an all-time high of £9·2 million. I am sure that Ynys Môn and Holyhead will benefit from this additional expenditure. There is a proposal, of which I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, for a major new food store in Holyhead, which is currently being considered for urban development grant support by the Welsh Office. A number of issues remain to be resolved before a decision can be made and officials are in discussion with Gwynedd county council and the developers.

I know that Ynys Môn borough council has applied to the Manpower Services Commission for approved training organisation status. Responsibility for granting approved training organisation status lies with the MSC. The MSC's director for Wales is still considering the application by Ynys Môn borough council and at this stage I can make no further comment on it.

Apart from its mainstream activities, the Welsh Development Agency is conscious of the need to enhance the environment and job prospects, not just in the towns, but in the countryside as well. Indeed, one cannot think of Ynys Môn or even Holyhead without thinking of the rural landscape there. The WDA has approved grants under the rural enterprise initiative to the tune of well over £100,000 for Anglesey as a whole. Applications for a further £130,000 of assistance have been approved and are awaiting payment.

I think that I have at least succeeded in showing that the Government's agencies have not been inactive. Indeed, they have been helpful, so far as Anglesey as a whole is concerned, in doing their utmost to reduce the high unemployment from which I know that Holyhead in particular suffers.

Today's *Western Mail* reported some exceptionally good news for the island with the announcement of 150 new jobs being created by the Imperial Metals Corporation of Canada which has decided to commence mining operations centred on Parys mountain. That is an enormous shot in the arm for the area and a clear signal that every part of Wales is now benefiting from the continuing resurgence of the Welsh economy. The future prosperity of Ynys Môn and Holyhead depends crucially on the continuation of the economic revival that we are currently experiencing.

For both the island and Holyhead, the vast improvements that are currently being undertaken to the A55, the north Wales coast road, will in due course bring benefits to Anglesey and to Holyhead by way of supporting not only the tourist industry, but industry in general on the island.

I hope that I have said enough to satisfy the hon. Gentleman that we have the interests of Ynys Môn and of Holyhead very much at heart.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 April 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Licensing (Retail Sales) Bill

As amended in the Standing Committee, considered.

Clause 1

AMENDMENT OF DEFINITION OF "SALE BY RETAIL" IN LICENSING ACT 1964

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 8, leave out 'to any one person'.

It would be wrong to say that the Bill was subjected to protracted scrutiny on Second Reading. Indeed, this is the first occasion on which this excellent measure, which is the child of my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), has been debated on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Committee discussed the Bill for three sittings and it was suggested in some quarters—quite wrongly, and the suggestion was rejected by you, Mr. Speaker—that we were filibustering? We considered serious amendments. We examined some of them at great length. We think that the Bill has now been fully considered.

Mr. Gow: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I have studied the reports of Standing Committee C with great care. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) was a member of the Standing Committee, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner), who is partly a parent of the Bill.

Our debate takes place on the 87th birthday of the Emperor of Japan and on the 46th birthday of the deputy Foreign Secretary. I know that my hon. Friends the Members for Reigate and for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) have already been in touch with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, raising with her issues about double summer time which were considered by the House last evening. I do not want to be led astray down those paths, however.

As well as the two birthdays to which it is right that the House should pay tribute, we should note that our debate on the subject of drink takes place in the absence of my right hon. Friend the Father of the House. The House should not despair, however, because seated on the Treasury Bench is the Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household—my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). He is visiting us at the start of a weekend which appears for him to have begun already. He is in his place because he has a deep interest in alcohol. I have an interest in alcohol, but it is not quite the same as that of my hon. Friend the Vice-Chamberlain.

I see that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is in his place.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): No, I am not.

Mr. Gow: He is not sitting beside the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). That would be quite wrong. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was a member not of Standing Committee C but of that Committee which considered the Housing Bill. You may wonder, Mr. Speaker, why I am bringing the hon. Member for Newham, North-West into the debate——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are considering the Licensing (Retail Sales) Bill, not what went on in the Housing Bill Standing Committee, interesting though that may have been.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): We need to know who is in the Chamber.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was a member of the Standing Committee. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison).

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I do not know why my hon. Friend should wish to give way to me. I have no wish to intervene in the debate, so overcome am I by my hon. Friend's eloquence.

Mr. Gow: I do not want to be led astray, particularly with you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Especially when the hon. Member is moving the amendment.

Mr. Gow: That is true. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will have studied closely the Bill and the amendment. The amendment seeks to leave out the words, "to any one person". When I was discussing the series of amendments with some of my hon. Friends I wondered whether the words, "to any one person" were really necessary.

I dislike very much even raising a doubt about whether the draftsmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) could in any way be defective. It is possible, although the clause was considered most carefully in Committee, that the point that I draw to the attention of the House on Report was overlooked. I say that to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East and to the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who has brought with him a massive volume of paper and books that are not readily available to Back Benchers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This particular book is not so readily available to Back Benchers because I have nicked it from the Library and it was the only copy.

Mr. Gow: That book was written by my noble Friend Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone who has been engaged in a very erudite correspondence through *The Times*—with which I am in respectful agreement—with Lord Jenkins, who used to sit close to where the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is seated, and who used to be in the same party as the hon. Member.

[Mr. Gow]

Lord Jenkins of Hillhead has been engaged in a correspondence in *The Times*—I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman reads *The Times*—about the powers of another place. It will be interesting to see, when the Bill reaches another place, whether the amendment is rejected or withdrawn. It is quite possible that the amendment will be considered in another place.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Will my hon. Friend say whether he believes, in the light of the Under-Secretary of State's presence on the Front Bench, the amendment arises out of some conspiracy or some cock-up?

Mr. Gow: The amendment was tabled by me. It is perfectly true that none of my hon. Friends has added his or her name to the amendment. I think that it would have been in order for the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) to add her name to this first amendment. Madam Deputy Speaker confirms that that is so. It would not have been possible at this stage for the Minister's father to add his name since he is a member of another place.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): My hon. Friend mentioned the Minister's father. Would it be appropriate for us all to congratulate him on the excellent interview that he gave on television last night in which he spoke for the British people?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I doubt whether that relates to the amendment before us.

Mr. Gow: I entirely agree with the ruling that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have given. We want to know, either from my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner), who had a great deal to do with the parenthood of the Bill—I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East will not think it discourteous of me when I say that they were joint parents of the Bill——

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): There are usually joint parents.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend is quite wrong about that. How many letters now start off, "I am a one-parent family"?

Mr. Tony Banks: Obviously the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is prepared to give way to anyone this morning, even to me. Although it can end up as a single-parent family, at the point of conception two parents are usually involved, unless it is a virgin birth.

Mr. Gow: As my hon. Friend—I almost referred to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) as my hon. Friend. Indeed, we had many happy discussions about the Housing Bill. However, I should not be led astray by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gow: What do you think, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Chair to determine whether an hon. Member must give way. The hon. Member has given away a great deal of time this morning.

9.45 am

Mr. Gow: I shall give way to my hon. Friend and if my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate should seek to intervene I shall certainly give way to him.

Mr. John Marshall: My hon. Friend referred to the number of one-parent families. Is he aware that more than 20 per cent. of births are illegitimate? Would he consider that as being related to the availability of alcohol?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member's interventions do not relate to the amendment.

Mr. Gow: I believe that the Bill will be improved and its comprehensibility advanced if we omit the words "to any one person" because they are superfluous. My hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East will acknowledge that those words are not necessary and that the clause will be made clearer if those words are omitted. I expect that to be the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East, and I expect that the Minister, when he advises the House, will agree that the amendment is a modest improvement to this excellent Bill.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: I always hesitate to disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) because for four glorious days in 1983 I served as his Parliamentary Private Secretary and I have always held him in the greatest respect.

Although I have no particular objection to the amendment, as it does not affect my Bill, I believe that when my hon. Friend the Minister addresses the House we shall find that the amendment will have consequential effects on the major licensing Acts that have been passed. Therefore, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne might find it wiser to withdraw the amendment, but perhaps it would be for the convenience of the House if we were to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister about that.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have to say that I had not expected to speak so early in the debate. It occurred to me that this kind of amendment, striking at the root of parliamentary draftsmanship, about which hon. Members from both sides of the House would like to speak.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has raised the matter and I have been challenged, as it were, by his former Parliamentary Private Secretary. I fear that I shall not rise to that challenge in quite the way that he would have done had he continued with his speech a little longer. There is no doubt that the question that has been raised so clearly by my right hon. Friend—I am sorry, I mean my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne; I cannot think how such an omission has occurred—is a matter of some importance. That is because there is a nasty tendency on the part of those who draft legislation to increase the volume of words that appear in the Bill. Consequently, it is important that when a certain phrase appears in a Bill of this kind we should be in a position to justify it. Otherwise, out of an abundance of caution, we shall find the language of the Bill being multiplied, with phrase being piled upon phrase, and becoming verbose. In the end, we have to ask what it means.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Precisely.

Mr. Hogg: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman supports me. He will remember that on a number of occasions in Committee, when I have had the privilege of serving with him, he has tried to add phrases that have no meaning, but on this occasion I see that we are as one. Incidentally, that also applies to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). He has given me some nasty moments, for example, on money resolutions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): That is one of life's modest consolations.

Mr. Hogg: If it is one of life's modest consolations for the hon. Member for Bradford, South, I have to say that it was one of my embarrassments, but I hope that I rose to the occasion with good humour and charm. In any event, the hon. Gentleman, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and I, and, I think, the Vice-Chamberlain Household, Lord Tinky-pooh and various hon. Members are anxious to know——

Mr. Gow: Did I hear my hon. Friend refer in a somewhat disparaging way to a member of Her Majesty's Household? At the beginning of the debate, did I not remind my hon. Friend that today is the 87th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan? Were not the words that fell from my hon. Friend's lips anticipated earlier by the marvellous Mr. W. S. Gilbert?

Mr. Hogg: That is the problem. I was reminded about the glorious birthday of the Emperor of Japan, and that put the unhappy words "Tinky-pooh" into my mind. I withdraw them, because it is disparaging to my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) and, no doubt, to the Emperor of Japan. Therefore I withdraw them on that ground as well.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend realise how closely the Bill is related to the Emperor of Japan?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that such references were ruled out of order earlier.

Mr. Gow: I was about to refer to the Deputy Foreign Secretary because you had ruled, Madam Deputy Speaker, that she could have added her name to the amendment. I draw that fact to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Hogg: It is true that my hon. Friend the Deputy Foreign Secretary could have done just that. Had she done so, it would have been a great advantage because she occupies a much more distinguished place in the Government than I do. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I do not know how to reply to the sedentary interventions behind me, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I feel sure that you would not wish me to do so. Nevertheless, had she added her name to the amendment, the House would have had the benefit of a speech from my hon. Friend the Deputy Foreign Secretary and she would have been able to bring her international experience to bear upon it.

Mr. Robert Hayward: And her intellect.

Mr. Hogg: And, indeed, her intellect. We should have had both a precise analysis of the legal questions and the experience of my hon. Friend the Deputy Foreign Secretary, who would have drawn upon comparisons with Germany, France, Italy and——

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): Is it not the case that, had she done so, she would not have remained Deputy Foreign Secretary for very long?

Mr. Hogg: I do not know about that. It is not for me to speculate on the future of my hon. Friend the Deputy Foreign Secretary, but I should have thought that the House would have been better informed——

Mr. Andrew MacKay: My hon. Friend the Minister seems to be somewhat confused over titles. Understandably, but wrongly, he referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) as his right hon. Friend. I share his view that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne should be my right hon. Friend, but he has just done a grave injustice to the Deputy Foreign Secretary by calling her his hon. Friend. He should know, as I know, that she was made a Privy Councillor about 18 months ago. No doubt he would wish to add his congratulations to her.

Mr. Hogg: I most certainly wish to add my congratulations, but I think that they may be a trifle belated. I have to say that I am overcome by shame. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not, on the whole, overcome by shame, but on this occasion I feel that the point that has been made is particularly sharp.

Mr. Holt: Is not my hon. Friend's error compounded even more by the fact that our right hon. Friend is the only other Lady, apart from the Prime Minister, who is a right hon. Member of the House?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is rubbing salt into the wound. All that I can do is to grovel, and I do so in a way that I hope is much more meaningful than the way in which others grovelled in this House a few days ago. I have committed a grave sin. I can only apologise to my hon. Friends and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who is not here today. I have a feeling that if I continue in this vein, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall be in serious trouble with your good self.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is no post known to the law as Deputy Foreign Secretary. May we know to whom my hon. Friend the Minister is referring?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not think that that has anything whatever to do with the legislation that is before us. We ought not to go down that path.

Mr. Hogg: It is a tribute——

Mr. Gow: Why has my hon. Friend not paid tribute to our right hon. Friend the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine)? Was not mention made at the beginning of the debate to the Father of the House? Did we not say that our proceedings would be strengthened if only he were to arrive?

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that I had not noticed that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point had come into the Chamber, but that is a fact upon which we should comment. Very few hon. Members know or care more than he does about legislation that relates to alcohol. I think that I speak on behalf not only of the Treasury Bench and my hon. Friends but of the hon. Members for Erdington, for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs Golding), when I say that we

[Mr. Hogg]

very much welcome the presence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. His presence denotes the possibility that this legislation will be examined in somewhat greater detail than might otherwise have been the case. That is inevitably good, especially on a Friday morning when we have the time to explore these matters in some detail. On behalf, therefore, of all right hon. and hon. Members who may be in the Chamber, or who are shortly to arrive, I welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and hope that he has a very full contribution to make to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) raised a point of order about the term "Deputy Foreign Secretary". He was right to do so, but it is a tribute to the reputation of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne that the description that he applied should have been treated by hon. Members as a definitive description. Strictly speaking, he was not right, but, as on many occasions, he sets the tone that this Chamber is anxious to follow.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend could be misled by the fact that the BBC constantly refers to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) as the Deputy Foreign Secretary. We all know that the BBC never makes a mistake.

Mr. Hogg: It is perfectly true that our understanding of the facts may occasionally be perverted by the BBC, and it is undoubtedly true that——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. These proceedings are by no means tedious but they are quite irrelevant.

Mr. Hogg: You may remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that about 10 minutes ago I said that if I pursued my then current line I should be ruled out of order by you, but just as I was turning to the point with which I now wish to deal—the words "to any one person"—I was sidertracked by the very welcome arrival of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. Should that phrase be in the Bill? We began from the proposition that we should not include words that are surplus to the meaning of the Bill. Are those words surplus to the meaning of the Bill, and do they damage its effect?

Mr. Holt: We are getting into trouble with titles this morning. To help us make up our minds about the amendment, will my hon. Friend say whether he has consulted the parliamentary draftsmen about whether the amendment would preclude a pregnant lady from purchasing liquor?

10 am

Mr. Hogg: That possibility was not in my mind when I first considered the amendment. Although it is capable, by extension, of applying to persons not present in the corporeal world, perhaps my hon. Friend is stretching the point further than I would wish. I shall discuss the matter at an appropriate moment with the parliamentary draftsmen and explore possible further refinements of the law to make the position crystal clear. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) for raising that drafting point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne looks as though he is about to leap to his feet. Does he wish to intervene?

Mr. Gow: No.

Mr. Hogg: We have just witnessed a unique event. I invited my hon. Friend to intervene, but he declined. I always welcome new experiences.

I revert to the interesting, if somewhat detailed, question whether the phrase, "to any one person" should appear in the Bill. There are two reasons why it should not. First, there is the question of its impact on related legislation. The House will be aware of the provisions of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979, particularly section 4(4). The definition of "sale by retail" in the Bill follows broadly the provsions contained in section 4(4) of the 1979 legislation, where the words

"at any one time to any one person"

appear. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne is a lawyer. I was a lawyer and hope never to be one again. We understand the importance of consistency in legislation. If I were to make one serious point—I hope to make many serious points—I would suggest that it is desirable to have the same definitions in relevant and related legislation. For that reason, I find the amendment difficult to accept.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend has raised an interesting point of principle about the way in which the country is run. In view of his contribution to a recent debate, is he suggesting that when a Government have made a cock-up and legislation is on the statute book, it is inviolate for all time and cannot be amended by subsequent wiser thinking? That would suggest that a measure passed in 1982 would stand for ever. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made a valid contribution. It is wrong to say that because words have been enshrined in legislation, or that because in the past some buffoons accepted them, we must accept them for all time.

Mr. Hogg: I am a wiser person than I was two nights ago. I believe that the phrase that I used was a trifle inelegant, so I shall not repeat it. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh, however, is right. If an error was made some time ago, we are not bound by it thereafter. We are entitled to consider legislation and decide whether the error should persist I do not believe that the 1979 legislation is defective in its definition. I am, therefore, anxious to maintain consistency between relevant and related legislation.

Mr. Hayward: I am sure that my hon. Friend would like to comment on whether the voters of Eastleigh, North took this amendment into consideration when yesterday they increased the Conservative majority from 228 to 511. The Labour party's vote decreased dramatically.

Mr. Hogg: I suspect, although I cannot speak authoritatively, that the answer is no. I imagine that the voters of Eastleigh, North had in mind the Government's successful policies and the great leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Those facts are more self-evident than the true but less self-evident merits of the Bill.

The Government are neutral about the passage of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) was right to draw to the attention of the House our remarkable victory. I think that it had more to do with

the overall success of the Government and the defects of the Opposition than the merits of this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Holt: And a good candidate.

Mr. Hogg: And, indeed, a good candidate. As you, Madam Deputy speaker, will know, the Conservative party is extremely careful to select only good candidates. I wish that the same could be said of other parties. I am aware that I am trespassing, Madam Deputy Speaker. You need not rise, because I know that I am at fault. I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I would apologise to those Opposition Members who should have been selected had they been present.

My second reason why the words "to any person" should not appear in the Bill is that they do not deleteriously affect paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of clause 1, but they have a prejudicial effect on paragraph (e) because they would dilute the control encompassed in clause 1. They would enable people to band together to buy quantities of alcohol, the effect of which would be that such sales would be treated as wholesales and would thus be exempt from the licensing regime.

It was right that the phraseology of clause 1 should be challenged, but for the reasons that I have given I do not commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Gow: In view of what my hon. Friend the Minister has said, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Gow: Having listened to the Minister on amendment No. 1, I shall not move amendment No. 2.

I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, leave out line 12.

Line 12 of clause 1 states:

"to any canteen or mess."

This Bill is a small but excellent measure and it will give added protection to children who can be misled into buying alcohol from the back of a lorry. It will be warmly welcomed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House. It will also be welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), the Vice Chamberlain.

I think that my right hon. Friend the Father of the House will agree that not every canteen or mess sells alcoholic drink. My right hon. Friend is a deputy lieutenant of his county and has also been a soldier. I have never been into a mess where alcoholic drink was not served, but, there are canteens and messes, however rare, where it is not. Indeed, I believe that that is increasingly the case. My hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) drafted clause 1 on the assumption, which I do not believe is valid, that alcohol is served in every canteen and mess.

Mr. Hayward: I assure my hon. Friend that many canteens throughout the country in many industrial premises quite rightly do not sell alcohol because it is recognised that people have to return to work having eaten in those canteens.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend reinforces the point I was making. I believe it to be the view of my hon. Friend the Vice-Chamberlain that it would be no bad thing if there were more canteens and messes, within and without the House, where alcohol was not served. My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant) has many soldiers living in his constituency. Unlike the Vice-Chamberlain, he is allowed to have a drink. Indeed, in the past I have given a drink to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West, but I have never given an alcoholic drink to the Vice-Chamberlain. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point will not think that this is an incorrect recollection on my part, but I believe that in a canteen or mess I have given a glass of sherry to my right hon. Friend. Does my right hon. Friend wish to intervene?

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I am listening with intense interest to this debate. I listened to the high quality speech from my hon. Friend the Minister, which is what we expect from him, and to the contributions from my hon. Friends.

I was once the chairman of a working party—I think it was the first working party in the country—that looked into the question of alcohol in the place of work. We came to the conclusion—it was widely accepted by industry, the medical profession and the country as a whole—that alcohol and work were a mismatch. In fact, a high proportion of industrial accidents and an inordinately high incidence of absenteeism from work were caused by the imbibing of alcohol during some part of the working day. I am glad to say that, by and large, employers and trade unions agreed. I should like to pay tribute to the contribution made by the trade union movement. In fact, a distinguished member of the Trades Union Congress was a member of the working party. As a result of that, there have been considerable improvements.

There is also the growing problem of young people and alcohol. Youth leaders up and down the country are urging the provision of bars and canteens where young people can take a non-alcoholic drink to refresh themselves. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne is dealing with an extremely important point and I will listen to the rest of his speech with the greatest interest.

Mr. Gow: I was not sure whether my right hon. Friend had caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and was making a speech or whether it was an intervention. Certainly, that brief intervention has whetted the appetite of the House and I hope that it may be possible for you to call my right hon. Friend later in the debate.

10.15 am

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, with his long experience of canteens and messes as a former soldier, in his quasi-judicial role as a deputy lieutenant of his county, and as a member of the Privy Council, which, as my right hon. Friend knows, has quasi-judicial origins, has added support to the amendment. It is true that he was not able to bring himself to sign the amendment, but he has done something much more important. He has come to the House on the last Friday in April, on the very day when he could have been at the Japanese embassy signing the book on the Emperor's birthday. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) is giving a luncheon party today in order to mark her 46th birthday. All I know is that I have not been invited to that party, nor do I know whether it will take place in a canteen or a mess. I hope that my right hon. Friend's newly made constituency of Castle Point will continue to return him

[Mr. Gow]

for many years. He is not with the Deputy Foreign Secretary, but has come to the House, whose Father he is, to support the amendment.

For those reasons I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East and my hon. Friend the Minister will agree with the amendment. The glittering political career of my hon. Friend the Minister may be injured if he disagrees with our right hon. Friend the Father of the House and, in view of the added weight given to this amendment, I hope that he will feel it right to acquiesce.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has been putting words into the mouth of our right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I listened carefully, as I always do, to the intervention of our right hon. Friend and I was not clear whether he was supporting the amendment or simply making some extremely valid points, which have been helpful to the House, about the dangers of alcoholism at work and the detrimental effect of alcohol being drunk in the workplace. I felt that his remarks were supported widely on both sides of the House and that it was an intervention with which we all agreed.

However, with the greatest respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne, that does not necessarily mean that our right hon. Friend was suppporting his amendment. I had hoped that it would merely be a probing amendment so that we could have the sort of enlightened debate, such as we have had already this morning, on the subject of alcohol in canteens and messes.

I urge the House to reject the amendment if, after hearing from the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne does not withdraw it. It would be an embarrassment to the Ministry of Defence, our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces and messes throughout the land. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne is a distinguished officer in the Territorial Army and I am sure that he would be the last person to wish to cause such embarrassment. Therefore, I hope that he will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Hayward: In interpreting the word "canteen", my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), spoke almost entirely about military canteens. When I intervened, he referred to industrial canteens as well. Inevitably, one makes such an interpretation when it is associated with the word "mess", but there are many industrial canteens in factories and offices in the City of London, Westminster and this building. It is appropriate, as I think my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) will agree—as he did in his brief but lucid intervention—that people who are to return to work having had a meal in a canteen should not consume alcohol. It is a danger not only to themselves, especially if they work on industrial machinery, but to other workers.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Chamber is a place of work as well. It could be argued that it is just as dangerous for Members to go into the Bars here, return in a drunken state and participate in the passage of legislation as it is for someone in a factory to drink and then operate a piece of machinery. The hon. Gentleman should be equal in his treatment.

Mr. Hayward: I am not sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would accept the suggestion that any right hon. or hon. Lady or Gentleman ever returns to this place in a drunken state. I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will take the opportunity to correct that interpretation.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hayward: I should like first to deal with the intervention of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I point out that I have not been ruled out of order by the Chair. To prevent the hon. Gentleman from trying to provoke further debate, I should like to say that I made no allegations about an individual Member. Perhaps it would satisfy the hon. Gentleman if I said that Members return here suffering from a very heavy lunch.

Mr. Hayward: I thank the hon. Gentleman for clarifying the matter. I share his view that it is important that in all circumstances, whether in this place or elsewhere, but especially when safety is involved, people should be able to work to their maximum efficiency and not endanger anyone. One could reasonably presume, and hope, that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker)—if she is having the birthday party to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne referred, would return to work not influenced by any alcohol that she was able to acquire in a canteen, mess or club or for the purposes of her trade. No doubt my right hon. Friend will be able to convey her congratulations to the Japanese on the birthday of the Emperor of Japan. I understand that this evening the Japanese embassy will celebrate the Emperor's birthday. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Deputy Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will have been invited to that.

Mr. John Marshall: I wanted to ask my hon. Friend earlier whether he would comment on the advice given by the late Lord Attlee to a new Member of Parliament, that he should, first, specialise and, secondly, that he should keep out of the Bars.

Mr. Tony Banks: Most ignored his advice.

Mr. Hayward: I note that, as ever, the hon. Member for Newham North-West makes a sedentary intervention, observing that it was universally ignored advice. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was not suggesting that my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) or my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point ignored that advice so rightly given by the great Lord Attlee. I note that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West does not wish to comment. I am sure that the advice is not universally ignored, although it may be ignored by quite a number.

I return to my original point, as you would wish me to do, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek clarification on the amendment. Are we talking purely about canteens and messes in military establishments, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne spoke at length, or are we speaking in general about canteens? Clarification is needed by all those responsible for running non-military canteens.

I referred earlier to the by-election in Eastleigh, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State responded. There were similar results in Durham and Hammersmith which were not good news for the main Opposition party. This amendment, or previous amendments, may well have been in the voters' minds when they pondered before casting their votes yesterday.

Mr. Holt: I had no intention of speaking to this amendment, until I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). It seemed that he lacked the sort of background knowledge that I have had, having been a boy sailor and junior sailor. Some of the messes into which we were allowed did not serve alcohol, and that was always a great regret because we never learnt at a young enough age to control the problem, and later in life we perhaps compounded it. Rather than pass the amendment, we should first decide why we all want to be Holy Joes all the time, telling people what they should and should not do, and consider the matter in relation to canteens.

Having been a director of personnel in a company with five works canteens, all of which served alcohol, I do not recall many instances when people were the worse for wear, except perhaps on their birthdays. The Emperor of Japan is no doubt celebrating his birthday today. Perhaps you are not aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when I was a young lad in the Navy there was a tradition that on one's birthday one was allowed to get blind, stinking drunk and was never in trouble for it. When I was a young man in the Navy, sailors were real sailors and drank rum, unlike sailors today, who are technocrats who drink lemonade. The Navy currency was that each measure was made up of a sipper, two sippers were one gulper, two gulpers were half a tot, and two halves were a whole tot. A young lad knew how many friends he did or did not have on his birthday by the number of times that he was invited to come round and have a sipper, a gulper or half a tot, or a bosum pal might even give a friend his tot. That did not make the whole British Navy any the worse. In many ways it made it better. We did not lose too many wars or battles as a consequence. Sometimes we lose sight of these important little aspects of our life when we introduce measures such as this.

It should be noted that men like to drink. They like their pint of beer. I have even known ladies who enjoyed a gin and tonic. A young couple can go to the works canteen, have a pint and a gin and tonic, and indulge in intimate conversation spread over some time, rather than have to rush down to the car park, try to get the car out, knowing that the space will be gone when they return, and drive 30 miles to a pub. It is wise to say these things when dealing with this legislation. They enable the matter to be put in its proper perspective.

It will be a sad day when we do what has been done in some places and ban all alcohol. I am afraid, though, that I might have liked to ban alcohol last Sunday when I managed finally to get into a compartment at Wembley Park after the football match and was squeezed like a sardine. Someone, who perhaps had been drinking a little too much, happened to throw up in the compartment. The problem was compounded by the fact that the Holy Joes of the GLC and London Transport had banned smoking, and I could not light up to offset the fumes from that offensive action. The more we legislate to ban things, the worse they become. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne will withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I think that it will be to the benefit of the House if I proceed fairly quickly. There seems to have been a misunderstanding about the nature and scope of the words "canteen" and "mess". They are, in fact, narrowly defined in section 201 of the Licensing Act 1964, which states:

"'canteen', except in part X of this Act and in the expressions 'canteen licence' and 'licensed canteen', means a canteen in which the sale or supply of intoxicating liquor is carried on under the authority of the Secretary of State".

That is further defined as meaning, in effect, a military canteen. "Mess" means

"an authorised mess of members of Her Majesty's naval, military or air forces".

It is therefore a mistake to suppose that the word "canteen" is apt to include the ordinary canteens with which hon. Members are more familiar. It has a narrower meaning.

Against that background, let me deal with the substance of the amendment. All sales of alcohol are sales by retail and are thus subject to the licensing regime unless they are exempt, and the Bill sets out the categories of transaction that should be exempt. One of those exempt categories is "canteen or mess". The amendment would mean that those who run a canteen or mess could get their supply of alcohol only from licensed wholesalers, unless they were purchasing in quantities which constituted wholesale quantities, which, in loose jargon, is purchased in bulk. That has two unfortunate consequences. First, it probably diminishes the range of suppliers who can supply to a canteen or mess. Secondly, it might persuade the secretary of a mess or canteen to order a crate of gin when a bottle would do just as well.

On the basis that the amendment narrows the range of supplier and that it is at least capable of increasing insobriety, I advise the House not to accept it.

Mr. Gow: In view of my hon. Friend's answer, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

10.32 am

Mr. Andrew MacKay: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I believe that the Bill that I have piloted through the House represents a significant contribution to the reduction of alcohol abuse in this country. It tackles in particular, the dreadful problem of under-age drinking. I do not believe that there is an hon. Member who has not discussed with anxious parents, teachers, social workers or other interested parties the problem of school children consuming large quantities of alcohol. By making illegal the sale of alcoholic drinks, for example, off the back of lorries, to under-age drinkers—especially at carnivals and pop festivals—the Bill makes a significant move in the direction in which the country and the House wish to proceed: we want to ensure that it is as difficult as possible for young people to consume and abuse alcohol.

There has been one unfortunate aspect of the Bill's passage through the House. The House and the country have acknowledged that this is a significant Bill. Hon. Members on both sides of the House were upset, therefore, by the attitude of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and the supporters of his private Member's Bill who, earlier this year, tried to suggest that my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner),

[Mr. Andrew MacKay]

myself and other sponsors of this Bill, as well as hon. Members on both sides of the House who served on the Standing Committee, were in some way trying to delay the proceedings of this Bill and thus of the Bill which was introduced by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. They tried to suggest that this Bill was irrelevant—a gross insult to everyone who is trying to tackle alcohol abuse. Then they had the impertinence and cheek to persuade their zealot supporters—the ayatollahs who parade under the banner of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children—to write to churches and newspapers in our constituencies suggesting that we were filibustering.

First, as Mr. Speaker pointed out in a ruling on the Floor of the House, that was most certainly not so, and it was an insult to the occupants of the Chair. Secondly, it was an insult to all those hon. Members who are anxious that the Bill should proceed. It should be put on record again that that disgraceful incident did no credit to the hon. Members involved.

Today, we see proof of the Bill's importance. My highly respected right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who is also a strong supporter of the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill—I hasten to add that he took no part in the disgraceful episode—has the House and acknowledged our work on the Bill. I hope that in future hon. Members who have been fortunate enough to draw a relatively high position in the ballot and who choose to introduce legislation that is perfectly in order, as is their right, will not be harassed as my hon. Friends and I have been harassed by outside groups aided and abetted by certain hon. Members.

Mr. Hayward: My hon. Friend may have clarified the point that I intended to make with his reference to our right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). He used the terms "zealots" and "ayatollahs" when referring to those who supported the actions—which I regret—in support of the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). Perhaps he will make it clear that he was not referring to all that Bill's supporters, of whom I am one.

Mr. MacKay: I am happy to make that clear. I would put my hon Friends the Members for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who I know takes a similar view on the subject, in exactly the same category. I cannot put the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and certain other hon. Members on both sides of the House, who I am not prepared to name at this stage, in the same category and I certainly cannot include in it a large number of the Bill's supporters outside the House who parade under the banner of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children and Life, who behaved in a despicable way and have been suitably censured by the Chair.

I am delighted that the Bill is proceeding through the House. It is a significant measure. I hope that it will gain its Third Reading and proceed to the other place, that it will return unamended to us in July and that it will be on the statute book by the end of the year. I believe that it will help and do good. It is a modest but significant reform of our licensing laws.

10.38 am

Mr. Corbett: As the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) knows, the Opposition wholly support the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman does the House a favour by reminding us of the events that surrounded the start of the Bill's Committee stage. A number of us who served on the Committee were subjected to the most intense pressure by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) who made the most astonishng and false accusations about us and against us—not in this place but by letter circulated all round our constituencies, and directed especially at ministers of the Church. That led to a great deal of anxiety.

I have a Catholic abbey in my constituency and I like to believe that I have good and friendly relations with those who work there, although we do not always agree on the issues that we discuss. It was right and proper that, after a deal of pushing, the hon. Member for Mossley Hill wisely withdrew his accusations and caused letters to be sent to those to whom he had originally written.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was particularly offensive to select him for such criticism as he was appointed to the Committee in his capacity as Front Bench spokesman for the Labour party rather than as a volunteer? Does he further agree that the same applied to my position as a Minister, so it was wholly reprehensible to suggest that either of us had any choice in the matter?

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the Minister for making that important point. It was certainly implied, if not stated, that places in the Committee were self-selected for the malevolent and improper purposes ascribed to us by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. I am delighted that we managed to dispose of that episode, although, like the hon. Member for Berkshire, East, I greatly regret that it ever started.

The Bill is a small but none the less important measure. I suspect that there is agreement throughout the House on the immense and growing problem of alcohol abuse among young people. I do not pick on them deliberately, but one of the most alarming factors in the rise in alcohol abuse is the increase among the very young. A recent survey shows that children of 10 and 11 are regular drinkers and that there is regular heavy drinking by 13 to 15-year-olds. Anything that we can do, as the Bill does, to focus the spotlight on that problem is certainly to be welcomed.

It is a pity that the press does not give the same attention to alcohol abuse as to drug abuse. The problem of drug abuse is extremely important, but a hundred times more people are affected by alcohol abuse. For reasons about which we had better not speculate, however, it is extremely difficult to get the media to take an interest in alcohol abuse. Perhaps it is felt that sustained boozing is more acceptable than sustained drug abuse. I hope that that is not so, as abuse of anything is bad for anyone.

The hon. Member for Berkshire, East has done the House a service. I hope that the Bill will receive its Third Reading and have a fair wind through the other place.

10.43 am

Mr. Gow: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on having secured a

high place in the ballot and piloted the Bill as far as Third Reading. It is a short and in some ways modest Bill, but it is extremely important. Sometimes it falls to those who succeed in the ballot to introduce measures that will have a lasting effect for good on our society. I believe that that can truthfully be said of this Bill. It was clear from the proceedings in Committee and from my hon. Friend's speech in moving Third Reading that this is a matter about which he cares deeply.

My hon. Friend will have the satisfaction of knowing that when the Bill reaches the statute book—like him, I wish it a speedy journey through another place—and its provisions become operative, it will give protection to some of those currently exposed to exploitation by people seeking to sell alcohol to the young. My hon. Friend will be able to look back with great satisfaction at his introduction of the Bill and the skill with which he has piloted it through the House. I congratulate him again. I am sure that the Bill will be of great value to our country.

10.44 am

Mr. John Marshall: I join my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on his success so far with the Bill, which I am sure will be passed into law very soon. The temptation of impulse buying is a problem in a wide range of situations. By reducing the opportunities for impulse purchasing of alcohol the Bill will help the whole community.

As a community, the publicans of this country are a highly responsible group in their efforts to deal with under-age drinking.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Hear, hear.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her support. We all welcome her presence as she has played a major role in educating people into better diet and therefore better health.

The publicans of this country are highly responsible people who recognise that under-age drinking is a major social problem. They also realise that if they are found guilty of selling drink to persons under age they risk losing their licence and livelihood.

I believe that we should consider further the availability of alcohol not just from the backs of lorries but in supermarkets. The availability of alcohol in supermarkets at prices with which publicans cannot compete is a major problem. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department replies to the debate he will deal with that point and give an assurance that the Government are examining it extremely closely.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East will be thanked by a large number of people as a result of the Bill. As a parent of two young children, who in a few years' time may be tempted, I thank him. I am sure that he will also be thanked by many other parents and by social workers because the Bill deals with a grave social problem about which we all feel very strongly.

10.47 am

Mr. Hayward: I echo the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on introducing the Bill. I hope that it will have a fair wind and progress into law as quickly as possible.

I also echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) about the sale of alcohol. I might perhaps disagree with the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), as I interpreted them, on the consumption of alcohol by the young. Personally, I have no objection to the consumption of alcohol by the young in a family situation, so long as they are brought up to appreciate the effect of very limited quantities. The danger of allowing young people to consume large quantities of alcohol as soon as they are 18 is that they have no previous experience of it and therefore tend to abuse it. The Bill seeks to tackle that problem by dealing with sales which do not take place in controlled circumstances. Inevitably, that is where the greatest dangers arise. At present, alcohol can be bought from the backs of lorries at carnivals, gymkhanas, and so on. It is in such circumstances that people are tempted to consume a large amount rather than to learn slowly the dangers of abuse. In so doing, they may put at risk not just their own lives but those of others.

I share also the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South about the easy availability of large quantities of alcohol in supermarkets where it is not controlled in the way that it is, for example, in the family home or in a public house or club. It is too easy for people —some of whom may be under age—to buy alcohol in large quantities by taking it off supermarket shelves to the checkout. The checkout girl herself may be under-age. It is difficult for her to refuse, to call a supervisor, or to say to the person, "I am not going to sell you this large quantity of alcohol."

Like my hon. Friends and, I believe, Opposition Members, I support the Bill. I believe it will close a loophole in the law regarding the sale of alcohol and help to prevent abuse. We wish to see a realistic and sensible consumption of alcohol. We all hope that our society can progress to that. This measure will go a small way to achieving that end.

10.51 am

Mr. Gardiner: I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on his energy and skill in getting the measure through, at least to its Third Reading. As he and other hon. Members have said, I have a considerable interest in the Bill, as it is substantially the same measure as I introduced in the last Session of Parliament, so I take some pride in at least a shared parentage.

The Bill has an interesting history and teaches us much about the best approach to tackling the abuse of alcohol, which does, unfortunately, occur in our society. The Bill was promoted originally by the Wine and Spirit Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to which I occasionally offer parliamentary advice, in consultation with the Brewers Society and the Scotch Whisky Association, with helpful and constructive advice from the Home Office. I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department for the help that his Department has given with the measure, both in the last Session and in this.

[Mr. Gardiner]

The Bill is an example of the trade's desire to ensure that its products are not abused by a minority of members of our community, and that those products should not be sold to those who are under age. The trade is prepared to support, and in this case initiate, legislation that will prove effective in promoting what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) called "sensible drinking".

For thousands of years the moderate drinking of alcohol has played a significant part in civilised societies throughout the world. Alcohol is used for hospitality, for celebrations, in religious ceremonies and as an integral part of an enjoyable meal. There is also considerable evidence that, when taken in reasonable quantities, it improves health rather than worsening it.

About 40 million people in the United Kingdom, consume alcoholic drinks of one kind or another—which is about 95 per cent. of the adult population. Almost all do so in moderation, and benefit accordingly. The United Kingdom has a relatively low per capita consumption of alcohol. It is the lowest among EEC countries. There have always been some individuals who misuse alcohol, and certain people who sell it in such a way as to encourage its misuse, but, the highest figures given official credence show that a very small minority of people who drink develop alcohol problems. The figure is a little over 1 per cent.

In the United Kingdom there is extensive legislation to control the quality of alcohol and key aspects of its use. The trade bodies to which I have referred support all reasonable legislation to ensure that that is so. In a free society, responsibility for the proper use of alcohol lies ultimately with the individual, but society as a whole has a responsibility to promote its proper use. Parents, teachers and others who guide children and young people, the Government, public agencies, employers, trade unions, voluntary organisations, and sellers of alcoholic drinks should act responsibly and uphold the law.

The drinks trade wishes to promote sensible drinking and to ensure that its products are not misused. The efforts of the trade are two-pronged and relate to research and education. The industry is not interested in participating in the numbers game. Anti-alcohol lobbies frequently feed the press with manipulated and misleading statistics, carefully selected to gain popular support for policies which, for example, would prevent any relaxation of licensing hours and penalise the vast majority of moderate drinkers by heavy taxation. The drinks industry should not be drawn into that kind of phoney war. Instead, its efforts should be, and are, directed at funding the necessary research to find out why some people develop a drinking problem and towards educating those who are recognised to be susceptible.

The drinks industry makes grants and donations to over seven major organisations associated with research into alcohol misuse. It has also provided funds for research into various aspects of alcohol misuse to six institutions, nine universities and four hospitals. The efforts of the drinks industry to prevent abuse of alcohol follow similar lines to the Government's policy and are directed at target groups. Young people need to be educated on the strength of different drinks, on how alcohol is absorbed and eliminated from the blood stream, and on the harmful effects of excessive consumption. For this purpose, the Scotch Whisky Association, for example, has produced a booklet, "Alcohol and Man", which is available to all schools, and has also produced films and videos on the subject. There is an Alcohol Advisory Centre booklet, "A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Sensible Drinking for Young People". The Wine and Spirit Asssociation of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has produced a useful video for youth leaders. It is only by educating young people in this way, as they begin to come into contact with alcohol, that they will learn to drink sensibly and appreciate the harm of excessive drinking.

The drinks industry is keen to promote research into the problem of drinking and driving. The Brewers' Association has produced a booklet for all people who drive, giving the essential facts about which every driver should be aware. The Wine and Spirit Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has recognised—I think ahead of the Government—that too few organisations appreciated the need to consider the relationship between alcohol and work, and to develop a coherent policy. The association has produced "Alcohol Policy Guidelines for Companies", which advises them on how to develop a rational policy by which employees with an alcohol problem can be identified and treated.

Mr. Gow: What representations did my hon. Friend make to the Chancellor of the Exchequer before his last Budget, proposing that there should be much greater—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are on Third Reading. As a very experienced parliamentarian, he knows that Third Reading is concerned only with what is in the Bill.

Mr. Gardiner: I made representations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer before his last Budget and I am glad that he accepted most of them. However, I advise my hon. Friend that they were not directly related to this matter.

It is vital that when those in the professions involved are able to detect alcohol dependency, they are trained to identify and treat the problem. The Scotch Whisky Association gives an annual grant to the Medical Research Council to train doctors, nurses and other members of the health care professions for this purpose. The Wine and Spirit Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland publishes a booklet, "Drinking and Alcohol—Questions and Answers". It contains information for adults on all aspects of alcohol, and sets out the beneficial and detrimental effects that it can have.

Those research and education initiatives, together with this legislation, are vital in finding a solution to the problems of alcohol abuse. The answer lies, not in the manipulation of statistics, but in the recognition that while the majority of people indulge in only a harmless drink, a tiny minority abuse alcohol and must be helped. It is essential that all interested groups work with the drinks trade to find a solution to the problems, rather than indulge in an orgy of statistical manipulation.

Within the framework of education and research, the drinks trade recognises its responsibility to detect any loopholes in the law, and the Bill is a case in point. It represents part of the industry's commitment to solving the problems of alcohol abuse and to promoting sensible drinking. By the Bill, the drinks industry, together with my right hon. and hon. Friends, is making a laudable initiative to prevent alcohol abuse.

11.2 am

Mr. Holt: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on introducing this modest measure. Indeed, he referred to it as a small Bill. However, the length of a Bill, no more than the length of a speech, does not denote its merits or strengths. It has been said that for speeches to be memorable they do not need to be interminable, and neither do Bills need to be overlong to be meaningful.

I wonder whether the Bill is entirely correct. None would argue with its aims, but we must not continually give the impression that drinking is wrong. I am sure that many hon. Members were sad to hear today of the death of Lord Brockway. Until very recently he could be seen having a drink with his old colleagues in the Pugin Room. He was using alcohol, not abusing it; it was a means of enjoyment. Other people who used it in that way included Mannie Shinwell and Winston Churchill. We must be careful not to inhibit all drinking.

Although the Bill is good in many ways, I have one major criticism of it, and I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East is not in the Chamber to hear it. As in many areas, Parliament has the means to do certain things, but fails to use them. Penalties for breaking the law should be so severe that no one would dream of doing so. Why do so many people abuse the litter, speeding and parking laws? It is because they know that if they are caught, they will not face too great an embarrassment. If those who sell liquor to youngsters under the legal age limit faced swingeing fines and the confiscation of their entire stock, they would soon insist on seeing a birth certificate before selling alcohol to anyone who might be under age. Such heavy penalties would, in some ways, obviate the need for some of this legislation. The Government have been namby-pamby with offenders, and that has caused many of the problems. If they increased the penalties available to the courts, more people would obey the law. We should use the Bill as a vehicle for that.

I hope that the Bill reaches the statute book, but I fear that it will not prevent the timorous from saying, "Shall we or shan't we prosecute? Did they know that they had sold alcohol to someone under age?" If the retailer faced severe fines, he would take the necessary steps to ensure that the law was obeyed. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) said that the checkout girls in a supermarket could not judge whether to sell alcohol to youngsters. The law should be changed so that only someone over a given age—perhaps 40—could work at a checkout——

Mr. Hayward: Steady on.

Mr. Holt: That should be the law where alcohol is sold.

Mr. Hayward: Such extreme age limits are not necessary. The lower age limit for selling alcohol should be set at the age limit at which people are allowed to buy alcohol. My hon. Friend's proposal would not allow me to work at a checkout——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that the question of age limits does not arise under this Bill.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward), with his activities with a funny little ball, is somewhat of a Peter Pan. However, I hope that he appreciates the serious, underlying point that it is for the proprietors of supermarkets and other stores to ensure that those taking the money for alcohol are fit, proper and responsible. If the law comes down on that proprietor, he should not have the let-out of saying, "I am in the hands of my staff."

Although it is right to introduce this legislation, the Government must also consider the penalties and controls so that, ultimately, we can prevent the far too many young people who are on the streets with bottles and cans of alcoholic liquor from indulging in anti-social behaviour. The Bill will not prevent that. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot be definitive when he answers, but I ask him to give a thought to how the penalties can be stiffened to ensure that people do not profit by selling alcohol to youngsters.

11.7 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) on introducing the Bill and carrying it through its parliamentary stages.

The Bill's main purpose is to bring under the licensing regime the sale of alcohol from the backs of lorries and similar points of sale. It would, therefore, help the House if I reminded it of how the licensing regime is conducted. All sales of alcohol through retail outlets are subject to the licensing laws, the most important aspects of which are the restrictions on supplying the under age and on the hours of sale, and the various offences that relate to the manner of sale. The significant aim of the Bill is that all sales of alcohol should be treated as retail sales, and thus subject to the licensing laws, unless they fall within the scope of the exemptions set out in clause 1.

Paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of clause 1(1) prescribe various exempted sales, whereas paragraph (e) deals with quantity. If the nature of the transaction is such that it falls within paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) or if the quantity falls within paragraph (e), it is an exempted quantity or sale. Paragraphs (a) to (d) are probably what most people would describe as wholesale transactions—that is to say, a sale to another trader for the purpose of his trade, a sale to a registered club for the purposes of the club, a sale to a canteen or mess, or the sale to the holder of an occupational permission. Each such transaction is probably properly regarded as—I use a loose word—a wholsale transaction, to which it would not be right to apply the full rigour of the licensing laws.

Paragraph (e) deals with quantity, to exclude what is defined as "wholesale quantity" from the full rigour of the licensing law. That provision is enshrined in the Bill because of the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). In Committee, he was concerned about the fear that was expressed by organisations such as the Majestic wholesaling company that their activities would be caught by a prohibition which, in effect, was designed to catch back-of-lorry merchants. They felt that that was unfair, and the Committee was persuaded of that view, the Government's position being one of neutrality.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire moved the amendment that is now enshrined in paragraph (e). It protects genuine wholesalers dealing in substantial quantities, provided that they trade from their ordinary

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

business premises, as defined in the Bill. That exemption was understandable, and it won the support of the Committee.

During this debate, questions have been raised about sale by and to under-age persons. I shall answer those points briefly, because I am anxious to keep within the scope of a Third Reading debate. It is important to bear in mind that the Bill is to be treated in conjunction with the Licensing Bill has nearly completed its parliamentary process. In the Licensing Bill, the Government were conscious of and tried to meet several points that have been made by hon. Members in this debate.

Wholesale sales of intoxicating liquor to or by persons under 18 on wholesale premises—to use a shorthand reference, the Majestic Warehouse—are covered by the provisions in clause 17 of the Licensing Bill. In particular, it is an offence for a wholesaler thus defined to sell intoxicating liquor to a person under the age of 18. Moreover, it is an offence for a wholesaler to allow a person under 18 to make a sale of intoxicating liquor unless that sale has been specifically approved by the wholesaler or by a person over the age of 18 acting on his behalf. Some of my hon. Friends' anxieties are met by clause 17 of the Licensing Bill, which has nearly completed its parliamentary process.

Another group of anxieties have been expressed by my hon. Friends. In broad terms, they relate to the sale of alcohol in supermarkets. The point was most forcibly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward). I commend to him the provisions of clauses 16 and 18 of the Licensing Bill. Clause 16 greatly tightens the control in section 169 of the principal Act, the Licensing Act 1964. The law has been tightened up on sale to under-age persons. That provision applies to off-licences —for example, supermarkets—in precisely the same way as it applies to on-licences. I commend that clause to my hon. Friend.

Clause 18 is also relevant to my hon. Friend's anxieties. That clause also provides—very much in the same terms as clause 17 does in the context of wholesale distributors—that the sale of alcohol by an under-age person should be effectively supervised and approved. By the interaction of the two pieces of legislation—that is to say, the one now before us and the one that is passing through the House —we have tried to meet the kind of anxieties that have so understandably been raised in the House and in Committee.

My hon. Friends who have promoted the Bill are greatly to be congratulated. The Bill will significantly tighten the sale of alcohol. It brings into the licensing regime disorderly and ad hoc sales of alcohol. Such sales were previously outside the scope of the Licensing Act. That was undesirable, primarily because it resulted in the disorderly sale of alcohol and was in no way controlled by legislation. Of course, in turn, that led to the supply of alcohol to under-age people, or at least it provided the opportunity for that, which the House would deprecate. Having regard to those considerations, I warmly commend the Bill to the House. I hope that it will receive its Third Reading, and I congratulate my hon. Friends.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Community Health Councils (Access to Information) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 2

ACCESS TO INFORMATION RELATING TO MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS ETC.

11.17 am

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 3, line 18, at end insert

'; and

(d) whether or not the member has any financial interest in the affairs of any health authority served by the council to which the member has been appointed.".'

Clause 2(1) provides:

"A Community Health Council shall maintain a register containing the name and address of every member of the Council and of every committee appointed by the Council whether alone or jointly with another Council and stating in the case of each member of the Council".

Then there are three paragraphs (a), (b) and (c). I should like to add a fourth paragraph, (d), as set out in my amendment.

This is an important amendment. We all know that those who serve on public bodies, in any shape or form, and have a financial interest in industry, or whatever, should declare any financial interest. After all, for right and proper reasons, hon. Members must declare their interests in a register.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend, who is a new Member, would not wish to mislead the House. We do not have to register our interests; if asked, we do so voluntarily.

Mr. Summerson: I thank my hon. Friend for that correction. Nevertheless, whether or not it is compulsory, it is right and proper that hon. Members should register their financial interests and the register should be open for public inspection.

Exactly the same principle applies to this amendment. Community health councils exist to serve local communities and to represent them and their interests. Members of a community health council are , as the name implies, drawn from the local community, which is as it should be. Otherwise, the health authorities which serve the community could become remote from the members of the community. Many members of the community know nothing about their health authority. Indeed, authorities, divided as they are into regions and districts, can appear to be far away. For example, the offices of my regional health authority, which covers my constituency of Walthamstow, are based in Paddington. None of my constituents wishing to get in touch with it would think that it was based there; they would expect it to be based locally. Indeed, the offices of my district health authority, although based a little more locally, are some considerable distance away in a place not well served by public transport.

Community health councils have been set up to represent the interests of local people. They serve these vital interests. I was about to say all too frequently, but I shall amend that. Now and again local people have cause for complaint and it is right and proper that they should have a body of citizens who can put those complaints to the relevant authorities and ask for action.

Clause 2 states:

"A Community Health Council shall maintain a register containing the name and address of every member of the Council".

That is right and proper because local people must know who their representatives are. It makes life much easier for them and in many ways for the authorities, both regional and district, to be able to look at the register and see who the members of the community health council are.

The clause goes on to say that the council

"shall maintain a register . . . of every committee appointed by the Council".

It is important that those serving on the community health council should declare any financial interest they may have in the affairs of any health authority. Bearing in mind the immense sums spent these days on the National Health Service, it is important that those with a financial interest in the affairs of health authorities should have to declare it publicly through the medium of the register. The sums are of the order of £22 billion a year——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Twenty three billion pounds a year.

Mr. Summerson: The sum is £23 billion a year. That is an immense amount and all too often people and hon. Members do not realise that. It is only too easy to say £23 billion. It is only six syllables and it does not sound an enormous amount. One should think of all those noughts and remember that they are being spent not just once, but every year, and they are increasing. When such huge sums are involved it is only right and proper that local people should have a say in how the money is spent. Indeed, they will want to be assured that their representatives do not have any pecuniary interests.

I know a man whose company is busy putting up advertisements for various medical products in NHS hospitals. For example, if he wishes to advertise baby foods, where more appropriate than in the waiting room where expectant mothers are congregating? He is getting right to his target market. He is not directly taking money from the NHS; he is providing a supplement to it to ensure that when expectant mothers finally have their babies they have a good idea of what sort of products are available for feeding their babies so that, I hope, they have strong, healthy families.

Obviously, with huge sums in the system, there must be opportunities for speculation. A member of a community health council will have access to all sorts of information about the goings on in his local area, in which I include districts. If he has some sort of financial interest in the affairs of the health authority, that could be greatly to his advantage. We should not put temptation in his way That is not to say that merely because members have their names on a register, temptation will automatically be removed, but that would act as a good, strong, firm check on any action which could perhaps transgress or infringe the rules.

My amendment seeks to provide that the register shall state whether the member

"has any financial interest in the affairs of any health authority served by the council to which the member has been appointed."

That means that a member does not have to register his interest until he has been appointed. That is right. Someone may have been asked to join a community health council and it would be absurd to require him to register any financial interest before being appointed. Once he has been appointed his financial interest can be seen and taken into account.

I think that I am right in saying that any hon. Member wishing to speak in a debate on a matter in which he has a financial interest, although he has declared his financial interest through the register, must state openly in the House that he has that interest. That is right. My amendment does not mean that merely because someone has put his name on the register, he should not declare his interest in the community health council's proceedings.

The paragraphs all form a coherent clause 2. Paragraph (a) states that for each member the register must contain "the name and address of the body which appointed him". It is hoped that bodies which appoint members will know in advance or will at least ask the provisional appointee about his financial interests. It is important that the process is started from the beginning. There is no point in taking a cuckoo into the nest, and suddenly realising that he is the chairman of the regional health authority. I realise that that is not likely, but the point of the law is to be certain.

Paragraph (b) states that for each member the register shall state

"whether or not he is a member of that body".

That is clear, and I have covered it in my remarks.

Paragraph (c) provides that the register shall state:

"in the case of a member appointed by a voluntary organisation (within the meaning of the National Health Service Act 1977), that he has been so appointed."

I have some difficulty in understanding what that means. It appears to be a non sequitur. The latter part of clause 2(1) provides:

"and stating in the case of each member of the Council"—

which meaning has to be carried to each of the paragraphs. In regard to paragraph (c), therefore, the clause reads:

"stating in the case of each member of the Council . . .

(c) in the case of a member appointed by a voluntary organisation (within the meaning of the National Health Service Act 1977), that he has been so appointed."

Some of those words are redundant.

I have to consider the meaning of clause 2 and establish whether amendment No. 4 adds to it what I hope it adds. It would ensure that all members of community health councils are there solely to represent the interests of the local community. They should be able to be single-minded in their deliberations and representations and have no possible form of financial speculation niggling away in the backs of their minds.

Service for the community is what CHCs are about and I hope that it will be strengthened by the amendment.

11.30 am

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I have listened carefully to the arguments adduced by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) in support of his amendment. He is a personable young Member, eager to serve the House and his community. I am sure that he accepts that the only offence that I hold against him is that he replaced one of the most admirable hon. Members of this House—Eric Deakins—and will have a great deal to live up to to meet the performance and service that that former colleague brought to the House.

On first hearing, the hon. Gentleman's arguments appear reasonable. I urge the House that, on closer examination, the amendment is not at all necessary. The

[Mr. Andrew Faulds]

purpose of it appears to seek to ensure that financial impropriety by members of community health councils is prevented—an admirable aim, but it is not necessary in this case. I want to make some adverse comments on the arguments as to the advisability, as the hon. Gentleman sees it, of the amendment.

In the first place, CHCs are not established to serve health authorities, as is implied in the amendment. Their function is to represent the interests of the Health Service and of the public in the districts for which they are established.

Secondly, it would be difficult, to follow the argument that the hon. Gentleman advanced, to identify anybody who does not have a financial interest, in the broadest sense, in the affairs of a health authority, either as a consumer of services, or as a supplier of goods and services, or as an employee or even as a taxpayer.

The third argument is whether the answer on the register as to financial interest is yes or no. This is what the hon. Gentleman wants included. It is not at all clear how that information would be used or how it would affect the status of members.

The fourth point in rejection of the amendment is that community health councils are not strategic decision-taking bodies. They do not control the allocation of NHS resources as I think might be suggested in the hon. Gentleman's argument.

In view of my adverse comments, I must ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment. I hope—dare I say I suspect—that I shall receive the Minister's support for my rejection of the amendment.

Mrs. Currie: I congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) yet again on getting his Bill this far. As I said in Committee, the Government have an interest in seeing that legislation that reaches the statute book is satisfactory. The amendments that we discussed in Committee did not cover the area of work that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) has brought up. The amendments that we discussed then were purely technical. They did not affect the substance of the Bill.

I understand that the Bill is designed to provide greater access to the work of community health councils than is currently provided by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and that it strengthens the rights of members of the public to attend CHC meetings and inspect agendas, minutes and background papers, copies of which can be provided for a reasonable fee.

In an eloquent and succinct presentation, my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow discussed the role of the membership of CHCs and rightly said that, if they are to function properly, their membership must be correct and they must be seen to be working above board. In that respect, I have much sympathy with what he said.

Before I comment in detail on the amendment, perhaps I could pick up some of the points that my hon. Friend made, confirm some of them and put them in context. My hon. Friend was right about the growth in health care. It means that the efforts of watchdog bodies such as CHCs to ensure that the growth in money and staffing goes to patient care are that much more important.

Expenditure on the Health Service has risen to £23·5 billion this year, mainly because of the additional money required for the pay review body agreements. They have given 15 per cent. extra to our nurses and 8 per cent. extra to our doctors. A sister's basic scale will now start at a higher level than the top rate of the previous scale. Our senior staff are about to experience some substantial increases in pay.

The net result is that spending on the NHS this year is yet again the second largest element in Government spending—it is second only to social security. It has been larger than defence and education for some time, although in respect of defence there is perhaps not a consumer as there is in the NHS.

The Health Service involves a substantial number of people, many of whom are perhaps not best placed to argue with the producers of the service when they need it, so the role of CHCs is important. There is also growth in the private sector. We should remind ourselves that CHCs examine the state sector, but I have no objection to their taking an interest in the private sector in so far as it impinges on health care needs in a neighbourhood.

A lot more staff have come into the NHS recently. We have 60,000 more nurses—whole-time equivalents—more doctors, more physiotherapists and more occupational therapists. Indeed, we have more of just about everything, and yet many health care plans are predicated on more people entering the service. One of my worries is that that might not be quite so easy to achieve. We have previously recruited heavily among school leavers, but the number of school leavers is now dropping. That is presenting problems where the job market is active, as it is in London and my hon. Friend's constituency.

It will be important for consumer watchdog bodies to be aware that we cannot simply expect to recruit large numbers of staff as we have in the past, for they simply will not exist. That is particularly true of young girls. Therefore, it follows that some patterns of care and treatment and some patterns of work in the NHS may have to change. The role of the more mature workers in the NHS will become relatively more important. The implication of that is that there will have to be more in-service training and perhaps a switch from the intensive efforts on initial training to in-service training, such as has occurred in teaching and education. I hope that our community health councils will note that changing pattern and will not expect our staff to look exactly the same in future as they have in the past.

The main role of the CHCs are in representing patients' interests and seeing the patient as a consumer. Certainly there are many more patients now in whom they should take an interest.

In recent years we have been looking after an in-patient load of about 6·5 million a year, taking account of the fact that some people are likely to be readmitted. As lengths of stay shorten, particularly in psychiatry, people will seek help if they have acute bouts of difficulty. That is not a bad policy; in fact it is a good policy and has been pursued for some time.

Even if we take into account that there may have been some readmissions, it is certainly clear from research studies that the number of patients being looked after is far higher than it used to be. That means that the pattern of work is changing and the volume of work in some specialities is rising very fast, particularly in orthopaedics. The pattern of work between the hospital services, the community services such as the domicillary health visitors

and district nurses, and the work loads of GPs are tending to shift and the role of the community health councils has become more complex.

We do not expect that health care will cost any less in future; it will continue costing us more. We do not expect that in future we will be able to manage with fewer staff. We shall continue to need to use our staff very heavily and seek ways of rendering their efforts and their skills even more productive. I expect that we shall have to look after more patients in future.

Later today we are to have a short debate about the health authority in Eastbourne. On much of the south coast the proportion of people over the age of 65 has risen to a quarter of the population and is rising fast. For that reason we are obliged to look at patterns of care and service which are a particular reflection of the increased needs of our rising elderly population. That is a problem in Walthamstow, in Warley East and in Derbyshire, South, but it is a particular problem in some parts of the country where large numbers of elderly people have chosen to settle and spend what they thought would be their last few years, but have become their last decades.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): My hon. Friend said that the problem of the rising proportion of the population who are elderly is moving away from what one might describe as retirement resorts. That is an important matter. Whereas previously it was assumed that there were concentrations of elderly people only in such places as Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Eastbourne, in many parts of the country well over one in five of the population are of retirement age, and in some cases more than a quarter of the population are elderly people who are concentrated not only in retirement towns but in constituencies such as mine where people have chosen not to move away from their native communities.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend note that that phenomenon occurs not only on the geriatric coast but in northern industrial towns such as my constituency where so many young people are moving away to find work elsewhere leaving behind the older population who are less mobile and create just as many problems as they do in Eastbourne?

Mrs. Currie: Both my hon. Friends have made serious and important points. I must confess that I hope to do my best in the time that I hold this post to increase the proportion of elderly people in Britain. If I am successful in persuading people that by sensible modifications of their lifestyles in early and middle age they may thereby reduce the risks of preventable disease which stands at a high level in this country, it will not only be in Eastbourne where 25 per cent. of the population is over 65, it will be all over the country. In many parts of the country there is a rising number of people over 85. That offers us exciting opportunities.

Perhaps we should ask our CHCs to take that into account and ensure that at least some of their members are drawn from the older age groups so that the needs of this group are not ignored. People do not lose their wits or their citizenship when they reach retirement age and it is important that the services are responsive to their needs.

11.45 am

One aspect of the improvement going on in the Health Service to which the community health councils have contributed in their watchdog role, is the fact that we have much greater life expectancy. That means that the typical patient is no longer a young person. The typical patient is an older person and a women—in other words, an old lady. In the past women have tended to be a little acquiescent in their responses to care and treatment. As the patterns of demography and patient care have shifted in the directions that I have described, the role of a watchdog body becomes more important.

The National Health Service is a huge organisation which employs 1·25 million people. It employs more people than any other organisation in this country. In fact it is the third largest employer in the world. I understand that it is third only to Indian Railways and the Red army.

In any large institution the producers tend to have a very large say in the pattern and development of service. If we want to know what to do about medical services we tend to ask doctors——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I should be obliged if the hon. Lady would refer rather more to the community health councils, which are what the clause is really about.

Mrs. Currie: I apologise. At the end of that sentence I intended to show exactly how it relates to the debate.

If we wanted to develop services in pharmacy we would ask a pharmacist, and if we wanted to develop services in nursing we would ask nurses, if we wanted to develop services in optical work we would ask opticians. In other words, there is built into any major organisation the supposition, the implication and the inevitability that when we want to change a service we should ask the producers of that service. In future, we need to ask those who use the service what they think.

This is a small Bill, to which our official approach is neutral. We would not have introduced it ourselves, but we do not object to it—other work offered to us later intends to redress that balance. Just as it has been said in the past that war is too important to leave to the generals, I would say that the medical health of our people and the circumstances that we are discussing are so important that we cannot leave them only to the producers.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister has spoken about listening more to the users of our National Health Service. Did she see the fascinating opinion poll in *The Independent* yesterday which revealed that 29 per cent. of Conservative voters think that things are getting worse in the National Health Service and that 65 per cent. of the total population said the same?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) should address that question to the people who commissioned the poll. When another organisation which is concerned about the role of the consumer in the NHS—the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales—commissions its poll every May or June, it finds that 88 per cent. of people who use the Health Service say that they were satisfied or very satisfied with it. I suspect that it has a lot to do with the way one asks the question.

We hope that by developing our services and by developing an increasing responsiveness to the needs of consumers and potential consumers we may be able to get

[Mrs. Currie]

better value for money and satisfaction in some of those services. In the end, our overall objective must be better health, not just better opinion polls.

The problems of ensuring the interests of the consumer in health care are not quite the same as they are for cornflakes or chocolate. Health care is not an everyday product. In this area, the producer, the doctor, the optician or the dentist, has all the knowledge on his side. The consumer is at a considerable disadvantage. He is often in no position to argue because he—or, more likely she—is frightened or unwilling to complain and may find that he does not even know how to answer questions, let alone understand them, even though he may be in a great hurry to get something done.

That is why community health councils were set up in 1974. Their role has been discussed and in 1981 it was reaffirmed in health circular HC81/15. It was reaffirmed again in 1985, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) who confirmed that the status of community health councils would not be changed during the lifetime of that Parliament. I am glad to confirm that view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow commented at length on the membership of the community health councils. It would be helpful to remind the House that the regional health authorities appoint the community health councils, and that about 50 per cent. of the nominations come from the local authorities, although not all of them are councillors. Many of them will be people who have connections with the local council but who are not councillors. Their membership can be extremely valuable. The rest come from voluntary organisations and other interested bodies, including such august bodies as the Socialist Medical Society. Some of them make a worthwhile contribution. However, the community health council is intended to be composed of lay people. Our statutory instrument of 1985 made that absolutely clear.

People are disqualified from appointment as members of a community health council if they are members of a regional health authority or of a district health authority. They cannot be members of both. They are also disqualified from appointment as a member of a community health council if they have been dismissed otherwise than by reason of redundancy from any paid employment with bodies that include a health authority, the Dental Estimates Board, the National Radiological Protection Board and an area health authority. There are strict rules about who can be a member of a community health council.

We do not mind in the least if the members of a community health council are professionally qualified, but their job on the CHC is not to represent any professions. It is important that that should be so. Their job is to look after the interests of patients. There are other people on other bodies whose job it is to represent the professions. For example, on a teaching district health authority—the kind that I chaired in Birmingham from 1982—there are people who are nominated and appointed at the request of the teaching university. There is a nurse member, a consultant member and a general practitioner member. It is on the district health authority that we expect the professionals to make themselves heard, if they so wish, as representatives of their professions, not as members of the community health council.

It is also important that the membership should bear in mind exactly what are and what are not their responsibilities on the CHC so that they may discharge their work well. They have wide responsibilities which we expect them to exercise. They do not have to work entirely within the National Health Service. For example, a community health council in the city of Birmingham during the time that I was health chairman decided to investigate why patients were complaining bitterly about out-patient waiting times, particularly in the maternity hospital. There were a number of good reasons for that, some of which have been put right, although the others have not.

One reason was the difficulty of getting to the new maternity hospital. The CHC negotiated with the transport authority and managed to arrange that buses should run into the main hospital complex and right up to the door of the maternity hospital, so that pregnant ladies could get off the bus and walk inside. That was of considerable benefit to them.

Many community health councils have also become directly involved with employment linked to consumer needs. I have seen the work being done in east London. The community health council has joined with the district health authority to employ link workers and facilitators. It felt strongly that many local people, particularly the women whose English is inadequate, were having great difficulty in understanding the medical advice that was given to them. I thought that that work was excellent.

I saw what was being done in the east end, met the community health council and was very impressed.

Many CHCs are signing up with us for the Look After Your Heart campaign and for conferences on particular aspects of health care in their neighbourhoods. The people in east London whom I met were organising a conference on the health needs of the ethnic minorities and helped to reawaken my interest in haemoglobinopathy, from which some members of the minority communities suffer. Partly as a result of the discussions during my visit, we were able to launch the sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia cards a couple of weeks ago.

Most important of all, the community health councils have an important statutory right, almost the right of veto. That is why it is important that their activities should be open to public scrutiny and that is why I have not resisted the Bill. It is also why my hon. Friend's amendment is unnecessary. The statutory responsibilities clearly set out what the members are expected to do. I hope that my hon. Friend will therefore understand that I cannot commit myself to supporting his amendment.

The right of veto is set out clearly in the 1985 statutory instrument. If there is a major change in health care in a neighbourhood, the district health authority has to issue a consultative paper and consult the local people. That does not necessarily mean closure, but usually it involves a major closure, or a shift of service, or a transfer of service between one hospital and another. There have been occasions when CHCs have protested to me about a change that they consider to be a major change under the statutory instrument. I have shared their view and have told the district health authority that it must consult the community health council, which has the right to suggest alternatives to the proposal.

Those alternatives must be considered by the district health authority. If the district health authority sticks to its original view, or to a view with which the CHC does not agree, and the regional health authority confirms what the district health authority wants but the community health council still objects, the matter must come before Ministers. That is a very important right, though not quite a veto because the responsibility remains with Ministers. However, it is the right to force consultation with Ministers. We take that right very seriously, with the result that I frequently meet members of community health councils to listen to their views on various proposed changes.

There was a good example recently. I went back to the district health authority with the community health council's proposals, and I believe that we have managed to persuade the DHA that the CHC was right. That occurred in Liverpool where major changes are taking place. The city of Liverpool has 10 hospitals within a mile of the city centre, but the population is declining quite fast. Nevertheless, there are serious health problems that need to be addressed. A marvellous new £44 million hospital was built recently. The DHA now wishes to move some of the services on to that hospital site. That leaves it with the problem of what to do with the older and, very often, rather tatty facilities that it has in the city centre.

One proposal involves turning Myrtle street hospital into a minor injuries day centre, thereby serving the city centre as a minor accident and emergency department. The proposal was that it should be open until 8 o'clock in the evening. The community council told me that it felt that the injuries centre, which is currently open all night, provides during the late hours an excellent, sensitive and caring service to the children of the inner city, some of whom are seriously at risk of being hurt by their parents. They drift in during the evening to seek help from the nursing and other staff, either because they are in fear of going home and being hurt or because they feel that they need sanctuary. The members of the community health council told me that they regarded the service as invaluable and that it would be tragic for it to be lost for the sake of a few thousand pounds. I listened to what they and their Members of Parliament had to say, came to the conclusion that they were right and communicated my views to the district health authority. I told the district health authority that the community health council had contacted local GPs who were willing to provide some of the services. On that basis, we were able to agree that the Myrtle street day centre should remain open much later. I left it to the community health council, local GPs, consultants and the district health authority to decide what time it should close.

12 noon

Not all community health councils are good. It bothers me that some of them oppose everything as a matter of course. That is a pity, because much of what we are all trying to do is intended to improve the Health Service. We now have the largest ever capital hospital building programme and we are slowly replacing grotty buildings in Warley, Walthamstow and Derby with new ones fit to take us into the next century.

I hope that community health councils—particularly in areas where the Health Service has been neglected but is now rapidly coming up to scratch—will realise that they are not Her Majesty's Opposition. Their job is to represent the interests of consumers, who may be better served by the construction of new buildings, getting rid of grotty old properties and trying to keep to budgets rather than trying to break them. Not everything in health care can be a priority, and a community health council that realises that fact is serving local people better than one that opposes everything as a matter of course.

The role of community health councils does not conflict with that of district and regional health authorities or family practitioner committees, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow mentioned. I suspect that sometimes the role of community health councils becomes confused. The regional health authority is the strategic planning authority. We provide it with money for hospital and community services—the system is different in Scotland. We allocate money directly to family practitioner committees, which cover services that are not provided by hospitals, particularly those relating to independent contractors, family doctors, dentists, opticians and local pharmacists. The regional health authority allocates money and delegates responsibility to district health authorities, which run local and hospital services and community services such as district nurses and chriopodists. District health authorities also contribute to planning.

District health authorities normally cover a population of 200,000, although in London the figure tends to be smaller. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow feels that the DHA is not situated centrally in his constituency. In Derbyshire, the district health authority covers 500,000 people in an area ranging almost from Manchester down to Birmingham. There are only two district health authorities, two community health councils and a single family practitioner committee. However, I reckon that it offers a jolly good service. The fact that some of my constituents must travel 20 miles to the headquarters of the district health authority is a matter that we must accept. We envy the concentration of services in London.

The amendment confuses the roles of community health councils and health authorities. It talks about serving health authorities, but a community health council is not established to serve a health authority. Its function is to represent the interests of the public. The Bill serves a purpose because it is intended to open the activities of community health councils to the public in certain significant and small ways.

The amendment mentions "any financial interest". The word "any" is dangerous in legislation as the courts always interpret it in its broadest possible sense. I suspect that it would be almost impossible to identify someone who does not have any financial interest in the affairs of a health authority, partly because almost all of us are consumers of the National Health Service, partly because many of us are suppliers of goods and services—the National Health Service is the largest employer in the country and many of us have family connections with people who work for it—and partly because as taxpayers we are all interested in it. The average family, not only people who pay income tax but those who pay VAT, contributes £1,600 a year to the Health Service.

The wording of the amendment suggests that the only answer to the question that it poses would be yes or no. It is not clear how the information that it seeks would be useful or what difference it would make to the status of members of community health councils. I do not know

[Mrs. Currie]

whether the amendment would result in people who have a financial interest or those who do not have a financial interest being excluded. In the light of the comments that I made earlier, my hon. Friend might accept that, as we are all taxpayers and have a financial interest in the National Health Service it would be wise to think that only people with a financial interest should be members of community health councils.

Mr. Summerson: I shall give an example to help my hon. Friend the Minister. My father died two years ago, in a National Health Service geriatric hospital in Inverness. The care and treatment that he received was quite outstanding. If my mother, who still lives in Inverness, were a member of a community health council and a director of a company supplying services to the regional health authority—and perhaps, therefore, to that hospital—would it not be right that she should have to declare an interest?

Mrs. Currie: As a general principle, we would always expect members of public bodies to say whether some aspect of their personal or business lives might influence the opinions that they are offering. My hon. Friend is going too far, as the good lady that he mentioned would have a strong interest in ensuring that the local health service was cost-effective and efficient, that it delivered health in response to the health needs of local people and that it was available when she needed it. In that regard, other interests would be affected.

Should anybody serving on a public body such as a community health council or a district health authority have a financial interest in the outcome of a discussion—particularly if there was to be a vote—we would expect him to declare it and take guidance from the chairman about whether it was sufficiently relevant for him not to vote or be present. The community health council does not take such decisions, except with regard to its right of veto and to delay any major changes in the health authority. Its role is to take decisions about somebody else's decisions. It does not run a hospital or employ staff directly, except in very small numbers. Its main job is to make representations about the interests of consumers.

I do not see any overriding need to legislate along the lines that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow has suggested. Community health bodies are not strategic, decision-making bodies and do not control the allocation of National Health Service resources. Therefore, the amendment is unnecessary.

Mr. Corbett: I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) had a wry smile on his face when the Minister congratulated him on the Bill and made it clear that she was not opposing it. It will be within his memory, as it is within mine, because I was here on the same Friday, that a Government Whip on the Treasury Bench shouted "Object" and blocked progress. That led to my hon. Friend getting up on a point of order and venting his anger. Better one sinner who repenteth——

Mr. Faulds: My hon. Friend must not go too far. I very rarely vent anger in the House. I occasionally vent disagreement.

Mr. Corbett: My hon. Friend did it, so he will know what he was doing.

The Minister paints a picture of the NHS with which few members of community health councils could agree. Apparently there are no waiting lists, no closed wards, no cancelled operations, no shortage of specialist nurses, no shortage of midwives and no shortage of training opportunities. Indeed, this is heaven. I can tell the Minister, if she needs telling, that my local community health council has a much more realistic view. In the Good Hope hospital, which the Minister will know, which serves people in my constituency and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), a Government Whip, a ward was closed temporarily about 10 months ago, and remains closed.

I was interested in what the Minister said about the value that the Government attach to community health councils. Presumably, as soon as the hon. Lady leaves the House, she will get in touch with the South Manchester health authority. She will probably know that the South Manchester health authority agreed, on the casting vote of the person in the chair, to close immediately geriatric and rehabilitation wards at Burton house at Withington hospital, and psychiatric beds at the same hospital. There is nothing new about that. However, it was done without proper consultation with the community health council. Because of what the Minister said and the tales that she told about Liverpool, I expect her now to get in touch with that health authority and make known her displeasure at its lack of proper consultation with the community health council. I hope that in her usual quiet and persuasive manner she will persuade the authority to undo that decision until there has been adequate time for consultation. I do not know whether the Minister wants to rise to give me that assurance, or perhaps I can take it on the nod. That is how I shall take it.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman should never take my nods on the nod. We are in touch with all Manchester health authorities. In fact, I had the pleasure of meeting a small delegation led by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) this week, and we have been in touch with the three Manchester health authorities more recently. They have a statutory obligation not to overspend, and I have no doubt that they will also bear in mind the recent ruling in the courts that because a change may be temporary, that does not rule out any possibility of consultation.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the Minister for that. They have a statutory duty not to overspend, but they also have a statutory duty to consult. The recent court decision underlines that point. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) will be delighted when he reads the Minister's words on Tuesday.

There is an even simpler argument against the amendment of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) than that put by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East and the Minister. The purpose of the Bill is to open up the proceedings of community health councils and their papers to members of the public. I would hope that that is totally unexceptionable. If that is the case, and if the hon. Member for Walthamstow has worries about the misuse of a position on a community health council by one of its appointed members, the amendment will not stop that. If somebody is looking for naked commercial advantage from the proceedings of a

CHC, he, or she, under the terms of the Bill, has only to sit at the back of the room when the council is discussing an item out of which he or she may see an opportunity to make a bob or two.

I find myself in the embarrassing position of agreeing with the Minister's arguments against the amendment. Also, it is not often that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East and I are able to agree. I hope that on that basis, the hon. Member for Walthamstow will take all the advice that has been offered in such a free and kind manner and see the wisdom of withdrawing his amendment.

12.15 pm

Mr. Summerson: I have listened with the greatest care to all the advice that has been flooding in for the past hour or two. As the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) referred to my predecessor in Walthamstow, Eric Deakins, I hope that I shall be allowed to refer to him briefly. On the occasions when I met Eric Deakins, I always thought that he was a pleasant man. Indeed, on one occasion when we were both invited to address a large gathering of teachers who set up a howl of rage and execration as soon as I entered the hall, it was a great relief to see the friendly face of Mr. Deakins smiling at me from the platform. It is now a matter of history that the good people of Walthamstow preferred a Conservative candidate to a Labour one.

Mr. Corbett: Not for long.

Mr. Summerson: We shall see.

As I said, I have listened carefully to what has been said. Huge amounts of money are being spent on the Health Service. Indeed, £23·5 billion is now being spent on the NHS, which I think I am right in saying is about three times more then when we came to power in 1979. Community health councils doubtless have a great deal of influence, especially in these days of putting more services out to tender to get better value for money and to provide even more funds to be ploughed back into the NHS. Nevertheless, having listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Minister has said, her usual charm and perspicacity have persuaded me to withdraw the amendment, and I beg to ask leave to do so.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

12.17 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Now that we have at long last come to this happy stage of the Third reading, I do not want to detain my colleagues for too long from the later-in-the-day constituency engagements. The Minister has played a notable role in that. I have heard some extraordinarily lengthy pronouncements on a number of Third Readings, but I think that today's must take the biscuit.

I want briefly, because of the interesting history of the Bill, to enlarge slightly on how it came about. My hon. colleague the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) was responsible in the previous Parliament for introducing this Community Health Councils (Access to Information) Bill which he thought was an admirable little measure, and of course I shared that view. But the Prime Minister, towards the fourth year of that Parliament, decided that things were a bit sticky for the Government and that they had better go to the country before they got worse. She went to the country, and, unfortunately for us and the people of Britain, won the election. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that I have the agreement of the majority of hon. Members in the Chamber.

One of the unfortunate results of that victory was that this minor Bill fell, before it got to the Lords, on the dissolution of that Parliament. Although I have been here now for many many years and have put my name forward for most of the ballots over those years, I have never once been drawn earlier than 14th. I cannot remember what I did with that effort. In the first ballot of this Parliament I drew the 19th place. It was clear that, with that number, I was unlikely to be able to introduce a major matter of personal or public interest that would ever land on the statute book. I was fortunate enough to engage in discussions with members of the Public Bill Office. Out of that sagacious exchange came the suggestion that I should support an admirable little Bill that had fallen in the previous Parliament and stood a good chance of getting on to the statute book in this Parliament. That was how my support for and introduction of the Bill came about.

The Bill's purpose is explicit in the title. I need not enlarge on that too much, but perhaps for the record I should say that this legislation would require all meetings of the community health councils and their committees to be open to the public, and that is admirable. The Bill would require them to publish agendas—again, that is admirable—and permit the public to inspect and copy reports and the background papers to those reports, and permit meetings and documents to be closed to the public only for specified genuine reasons.

I am delighted that I have the broad agreement of the House and the Minister's support in introducing the Bill and furthering its advance on Third Reading. Because of the Bill's rather strange history, I should say that when I discussed the advancement of the Bill in Committee I was advised by parliamentary counsel that the earlier version had certain technical errors that should be put right. We pursued those errors in Committee and put them right.

Parliamentary counsel's arguments were based on the understandable reason that the Bill applied the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, to comunity health councils. Legislation of this kind, which picks up bits of Bills by reference to earlier Acts, tends to be untidy, especially as the Local Government Act was not intended to cover community health councils. Minor modifications to that Act were necessary to accommodate the different nature of community health councils. The Department of the Environment, which takes the lead interest in the Local Government Acts, drew attention to some "drafting infelicities", which I think is the phrase, and parliamentary counsel suggested amendments that secured technical improvements to the Bill in Committee. They affected neither the substance nor the objectives of the Bill.

As I have made clear, this is not a major piece of legislation. It is a tidying-up, good little Bill that provides public access to the proceedings of CHCs and their reports. I am sure that I shall have the Chamber's support. I very much commend the Third Reading, with the earnest hope that none of my colleagues will hold us too long in further discussion on this issue.

12.23 pm

Mrs. Currie: I cannot allow the Third Reading of this important Bill to pass without uttering a few comments, starting with congratulations to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I mentioned in Committee that when I was a child he used to frighten me. I listened to "Journey into Space"——

Mr. Corbett: Now the hon. Lady and my hon. Friend have swopped places.

Mrs. Currie: That is a line for the gossip columns this Sunday.

I used to clutch my father's hand while listening to that dreadful science fiction rubbish, as I now realise it to be, and there was the sainted voice of the fine actor that the hon. Member for Warley, East was once, and I suspect still is, scaring the life out of the nation's children. It was a very long time ago. On those occasions and in his sensible, intelligent remarks today he has done much better than he has when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been at the Dispatch Box and he has felt obliged to use his actor's training to try to shout her down. On those occasions, he does his erstwhile profession a disservice.

Mr. Faulds: The Minister is being naughty because she is provoking me into further utterances which I had hoped not to have to make. I am not interested in her comments on my previous profession. I was an extremely distinguished actor and I still am. I still have those talents, but of course I do not abuse them in this Chamber. I simply use them to a limited extent.

If the hon. Lady thinks that my interventions when the Prime Minister is speaking are made simply from a wish to create a small performance, she could not be more wrong. I profoundly disagree with the Prime Minister's philosophy and thinking and consequent damage that she has done to the community of Britain.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please return to the Bill.

Mrs. Currie: The community health councils to which the Bill refers were established in 1974. They operate under current legislation—the National Health Service community health council regulations 1985, some of which I quoted earlier, and the current circulars HC81/15 and HC85/11. Their duties are to represent the interests of the public in the Health Service in their districts. They are not by themselves strategic bodies or decision-making bodies. They do not run any parts of the Health Service, although one or two have decided, commendably, to use some of their allocation of funds to employ staff in a role that helps to facilitate the relationships of patients to the Health Service, especially when there are some communication problems. I commend that, although we would not want them to expand that role to the point where they were trying to vie with the district health authority which perhaps should have been fulfilling that role in the first place.

The community health councils have certain rights. A CHC has the right to relevant information from the local district health authority and the family practitioner committee. I sometimes wish that the CHCs spent more time looking at the work to which the family practitioner committee relates. The bulk of our patients see their GP rather than have contact with the hospital. That is one of the best parts of our system. Our GP system acts as a gateway system. It is one reason why we have better health and more effective use of health care money than many other countries.

The CHCs have the right of access to district health authority premises. They have asked for rights of access to private sector establishments and homes. I am minded to resist that because I want them to exercise their statutory duties as regards district health authority premises. I have noticed with interest that in some parts of the country, especially where there has been a growth in the private sector for residential care and nursing homes, the community health council has been able to obtain the co-operation of the owners of those homes. In one place —I think it is Blackpool—a consumers' guide to the homes has been drawn up stating what is available and what is not. Local people, especially in areas where there is a large proportion of elderly people, perhaps even very elderly people with elderly children trying to look after them, have found such publications extremely useful. That is a fruitful aspect of work where CHCs can make progress.

As I said, the CHCs have a right to be consulted by the district health authorities on proposals for substantial developments or variations in local services, and that right extends to family practitioner committees; the CHCs must be consulted by the FPCs on proposals for substantial change.

The CHCs also have the right to meet their district health authorities and family practitioner committees once a year, and the Bill refers to such meetings. That is extremely valuable. It is to be hoped that that will be the minimum, especially in areas where there is much substantial change. It was deemed wise by my predecessors to write it into legislation that the community health council has the right to an annual meeting and the right to be consulted by the local family practitioner committee about changes in the provision of general practice and pharmaceutical services. In the next couple of years, as the reforms outlined in our White Paper on the primary health care services, "Promoting Better Health", are introduced, the community health councils may well be directing rather more of their attention to the services outside hospitals, especially those provided by local doctors. I hope so; they have much that is valuable to contribute.

There are 194 community health councils—rather more than the number of district health authorities, partly because since the reorganisation in 1974 it has been regarded as wise in some parts of the country, especially in London, to amalgamate some of the smaller health authorities that were losing population very quickly. We have just done that by amalgamating Brent and Paddington and North Kensington district health authorities to create the Parkside health authority. None of the boundaries of the community health councils have changed, so there are slightly more of them.

In 1986-87, the community health councils spent a total of £7·2 million, which works out at about £37,000 per community health council. That has tended to increase slowly, but it has kept roughly in line with inflation. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who was then Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security gave a commitment on 29 April 1985 that we would retain community health councils for the life of this Parliament. That was reaffirmed by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health at the annual general meeting of the Association of Community Health Councils of

England and Wales on 3 July 1986. We have no proposals to change in any substantive way the work that the community health councils do, although we recognise that there my be some benefit in the minor changes proposed in the Bill. While we would not have chosen to legislate on CHCs, we feel that the Bill does no harm. Perhaps the hon. Member for Warley, East should not attribute to me quite such ecstatic support as he suggested, but the Government are neutral, and we would not seek to oppose the Bill.

It has been suggested that the Bill's provisions are onerous for small bodies such as community health councils. I do not agree. Apart from anything else, the community health councils have budgets of £37,000 on average. Provided that they are well-organised, it is quite within the CHC's resources to implement the Bill's provisions. The CHCs themselves advocate openness and are bitterly critical of lack of openness elsewhere. Therefore, provided that they sincerely wish to be as open as possible with the public they serve, they will not need bureaucratic mechanisms to comply with the Bill. I had better repeat that the community health councils must comply with the provisions of the Bill within existing resources. Having said that, I await the decision of the House on Third Reading.

12.33 pm

Mr. Corbett: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) will take no offence if I say that modesty is not one of the traits normally associated with him. However, he is being far too modest in describing the Bill as modest. He may have noticed that his is a 90p Bill; that is the price that members of the public pay for it. The Bill with which we started the day was a 45p Bill and the one that we shall be discussing very soon, I hope, is a £1·60 Bill. My hon. Friend need not be too modest because he has pitched it about right and his Bill is clearly exceptionally good value for money.

My serious point touches on the Minister's remarks about community health councils having to carry out their obligations under the Bill within existing resources. It relates to the provisions for councils to charge a fee for copies or extracts of various documents. If the councils decide that it is proper to make a charge for documents, I hope that they will relate that charge to the ability of the person making the inquiry to pay. The House will recall that as recently as a week ago we were debating ability to pay. It is important that we should not let unreasonable charges be an impediment to people obtaining documents to which it is proper for them to have access. Perhaps I may put it this way. So far as I know, no councils charge members of the public for copies of council minutes and I should deprecate such a practice very much. I hope that, by and large, community health councils will find no need to impose any charge.

Mr. Faulds: Before my hon. Friend sits down, may I ask him just to back me in saying that although I cannot refer to my colleague the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) as the only begetter of the Bill, I think we should remember that it was originally his and that he has had assistance since then in getting his Bill, with my help, on to the statute book? I would be very grateful if my hon. Friend would just make a word of commendation.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It often happens that a Bill falls by the wayside for one reason or another and is then picked up by someone else. As my hon. Friend has said, that is basically what happened in this case. Perhaps one should take a more relaxed view of these matters—if it is nice to have one father, it must be even better to have two. I congratulate my hon. Friend. I hope that the House will give the Bill a Third Reading and that a general election will not stop it reaching the statute book.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Access to Medical Reports Bill

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair.*]

Clause 1

RIGHT OF ACCESS

12.37 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 8, at end insert

'and prepared after the date of commencement of this Act'.

It may be for the convenience of the Committee if I explain that although I have tabled a number of amendments which appear quite substantial, many can be dealt with fairly briefly. I am pleased to say that amendment No. 1 is one of those.

The purpose of the amendment is to exclude explicitly any retrospective right of access. The right of access under the Bill will thus apply only to reports prepared after the Bill becomes law. On that basis, I commend the amendment to the Committee.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Events this morning have meant that we have perhaps slightly longer to discuss certain aspects of this important and valuable little Bill than we might otherwise have expected. I welcome this opportunity. As I was not able to be present for the Second Reading on 12 February, I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on getting his Bill so far.

This important, small Bill is part of a general trend towards greater access to patient records, greater openness about health care, and greater awareness of the need for co-operation between practitioners and the patients whom they seek to assist. This is a feature of a noticeable change of attitude in recent years, which, broadly speaking, we welcome.

The Government's overall attitude towards the Bill is one of neutrality. We would not have sought to promote it ourselves. My task throughout has been to try to ensure that the details of the legislation are effective and will achieve what the promoter seeks, without causing undue difficulties for those who have to implement them.

Therefore, on that basis, the amendment is not essential, but I am sure that it will assist the passage of the Bill.

The Bill seeks to change the attitude, which has been deeply held for a long time, that records belong, not to the patient, but to the doctor. That attitude has been held in the belief that general access would harm the patient.

When efforts are made to put into legislation the shifts of attitude that are occurring, that should not be done retrospectively but should take us on from where we are. The Association of British Insurers has made that point strongly, as has the British Medical Association, which represents the medical profession, and I felt obliged to put that to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) whenever I met him to discuss the details of the Bill. I am glad therefore that he has tabled the amendment. He knows that, broadly speaking, he has my support, and that of many of my hon. Friends, in everything that he is seeking to do to open up patients' access to their medical records. It is important that we have the full co-operation of all concerned.

It is important that those who are calling for these changes, including employers and insurers, and, perhaps more importantly, the practitioner who writes the records and deals with the health care of a person, should not feel that records of days gone by, when the law did not exist in this form, or when attitudes were different, should be open to scrutiny.

I know that part of the hon. Gentleman's objective is to improve the quality and standards of the records. He, and many Conservative Members, feel that if records are more open to scrutiny, that will result in exactly what he wants. On that basis, we do not seek to object to the Bill. Indeed, at all stages I have tried to advise him in small but important ways on how the clause might be improved. I wait to hear the will of the House on this amendment.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister's wise advice on the amendment meets the anxieties of some of those who are likely to be affected by it. I hope that those who will be tolerant towards the purpose of the Bill. While the amendment makes it clear that retrospection is not intended, or implied, it would be unfortunate if that rare circumstance arose where the tick of a clock marking the end of one day and the beginning of another gave one individual rights while keeping those rights away from another. I am sure that if such problems arise, there would be a sensible way around them, without sticking to the letter of the law.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

INTERPRETATION

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 24, after 'to' insert

'the physical or mental health of'.

I should like to respond positively to what the Minister has just said. I acknowledge that although she has many other fish to fry, albeit it in polyunsaturated oils, on her political agenda, and in spite of her difficulties in other areas, both she and her Department have taken a special interest in the Bill. That is significant, because the Bill cost only £1·60. If we encourage hon. Members to measure the value of their Bills by the price of them that will only detain the House further on Fridays, because more expensive Bills mean more clauses. I do not know that I would go all the way with that advice.

Amendment No. 2 is also formal. It is one of a series of amendments. We shall deal later with amendments Nos. 7, 8 and 9, which seek to bring the Bill into line with the provisions in the Data Protection Act 1984 for access to computerised medical records. The Bill provides a definition of "medical report" that is consistent with those that have been adopted in the Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987. The Government believe it sensible to keep the definitions consistent on all counts, insofar as they are in the public domain. That is why we have used that definition in the Bill.

12.45 pm

Mrs. Currie: We welcome the amendment, which clarifies the definition of "medical report". Without it, the Bill would have included, for example, character references supplied by a medical practitioner. As the hon. Gentleman said, the background to the definition lies in the Data Protection Act, a major piece of legislation promoted by the Government, when issues such as what may be included in the report were dealt with in considerable detail in Committee and on Second Reading, Report and Third Reading. It is therefore eminently sensible to make good use of that experience; it is helpful if legislation is reasonably consistent and there is the benefit of having a precise definition.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks when he introduced the amendment. There is a considerable background to access to medical records that goes well beyond the Bill. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the commitment given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), when he was a Home Office Minister, that patients should have far better access to their medical records. Voluntary negotiations are continuing and we are hopeful that there will be some progress. I certainly want progress on developing draft guidelines for general access to medical records, which I hope will be achieved either this summer or in the autumn. It is now a year since my right hon. Friend made his commitment. A year may be a short or a long time in politics, but it is certainly long enough for progress to be made in negotiations between intelligent people. It is in the interests of everyone, and especially the health and welfare of patients, that progress should be made. We believe that the amendment improves the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

CONSENT AND NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 1, leave out from 'apply' to end of line 6 and insert—

'and before obtaining such consent has—

(b) informed the individual in writing of the individual's right under this Act—

(i) to have access to the report before it is supplied by the medical practitioner provided that the individual has contacted the practitioner and arranged to have access within the period specified in subsection (2) or subsection (3) of section (Access before supply of report) below.

(ii) to have access to a report which has been supplied for a period of six months from the date on which it was supplied; and

(iii) to seek the correction of information which is incorrect or misleading in accordance with section 5(2) below; and

(iv) to prevent the supply of a report in accordance with section 5(3) below; and

(c) invited the individual in writing to give notice in writing to the person seeking the report, when giving the consent referred to in this section, indicating whether he or she wishes to have access to a report before it is supplied.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this we may discuss the following: Amendments Nos. 5 and 6,

New clause 1—*Access before reply of report*

New clause 2—*Application to the court*

Mr. Kirkwood: As the Minister said earlier, the House is conscious of the fact that this Bill received a formal Second Reading. Although I understand that the House wishes to proceed to a later important debate, as some substantial issues arise in this group of amendments I wish to spend a few moments considering them in some detail.

The amendments are an attempt to strengthen and clarify the individual rights provided in the Bill, whose aim is to give people the new right to see the medical reports that their general practitioners, or any other doctors who have been responsible for their care, provide to an insurance company or an employer. Such reports are already supplied strictly with the consent of the person concerned, as is right and proper, but, at present, they are not available as of right to that person. The essence of the Bill is to make them available as of right.

Amendment No. 3 contains several important changes that repay some consideration. It will ensure that people are more fully informed of their new rights when they are asked to consent to a medical report being obtained. At present, a person applying for an insurance policy—or for a job, for that matter—is sent a form by the insurance company or the prospective employer. Normally, that form requests permission to approach the person's doctor. Under clauses 3, 4 and 5 of the Bill as it stands, they will also have an additional right to tell them of their new right of access and any other rights that are contained in the Bill. Some of the amendments extend such rights—for example, by allowing the correction of mistakes. If the amendments are passed, the current notification provisions will be extended.

I wish to be open and honest with the Committee. I have discussed the Bill with the Association of British Insurers and others. Like the Under-Secretary of State, that association has other fish to fry, but it has co-operated and tried to make the Bill as practical and workable as possible. The association was concerned, and made representations to me to the effect that the Bill contained some worrying features—for example, that there was no time limit for seeking access. It rightly suggested that, under the Bill as it stands, in certain circumstances a doctor could not know whether a patient was likely to want to see the report and, therefore, he might quite properly feel obliged to hang on to it for a considerable time before sending it out. That would involve intolerable delays. It was certainly not my intention to do that. The amendments will remedy that defect.

Another problem that the association saw was that, as the Bill stands, a doctor might immediately supply a report, only to discover later that the patient expected to discuss it before it was sent. I have suggested a useful procedure, and I shall be happy to adopt it to eliminate that uncertainty and make it easier to obtain access.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I may have misunderstood the basic purpose of the hon. Gentleman's Bill. Is it implicit that a report may not be sent by a doctor unless the patient agrees with it, or is it implicit that a report may not go forward unless the patient has seen it? If it is a matter of seeing the report, why can it not simply be covered by what I assume to be normal office practice? A doctor may copy the report, which he would surely do in any event for his own records.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has probably slightly misunderstood the Bill. There are clear provisions. I know that the amendments are long and complicated, but amendment No. 6 substantially deals with checks and balances and with what the patient can do in terms of amending reports or preparing statements if he considers that he cannot persuade the doctor that there has been an explicit error. Indeed, the patient has three options. He may withdraw his consent to the medical practioner supplying the report. We have tried to take careful account of such matters and provide a proper balance.

I stress that in no sense are we asking for the medical practitioner to change his judgment. That would be quite improper. We are trying to give the patient a balanced right, to make sure that any inaccuracies are corrected and matters relating to judgment are at least subject to his statement, in an attempt to elucidate his point of view. I hope that that has dealt with the point, as I am anxious to win the support of the Committee.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I support the general principle which the hon. Gentleman seeks to advance in this important Bill, but I wonder where this complex amendment takes us. Is it implicit in the amendment that at some point the individual may say, "I shall go elsewhere. I am not going along with this"? The insurer may say that a second opinion is required. At what point might that happen?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am giving the right to a patient to withdraw his consent. If there is an irreconcilable dispute between the medical practitioner who is supplying the report to an insurance company or an employer and the patient—it may prejudice a job or an insurance policy—under the amendment the patient has the right to say, "I would prefer not to have this report shown to my prospective employer or insurance company. I would prefer no report to be given." Then the medical practitioner would be in breach of his ethical duty to his patient if he supplied the report.

I know that the hon. Gentleman has a keen interest in these matters. I have been through the amendment line by line with both the ABI and the BMA. That combination, together with the infallible reasoning and inspection of the Minister, gives the amendment an impeccable pedigree. If the hon. Gentleman does not take my word for it, I hope that he will accept the word of the ABI, the BMA and the Minister.

If the amendments are passed, the new consent forms would ask the applicant explicitly to indicate whether he or she wanted to see the report before the doctor supplied it. That is the function of paragraph (c) in amendment No. 3. If the applicant agreed, the insurer or employer would pass that information to the doctor when contacting him for a report. The doctor would be required to give the patient up to 21 days to see the proposed report. Taken with new clause 1, amendment No. 3 would allow for that procedure which would replace the present provision in clause 4. If the Committee agrees with the amendments, it would be necessary to remove clause 4.

We have attempted to clarify other matters, but I shall not go into them all because it would detain the Committee too long. However, I must refer to one or two other issues.

The amendments will omit the 90-day time limit that was in the original Bill. In proposing the limit I was thinking of job applications and applications for insurance policies, and, indeed, the proposal is uncontroversial in those contexts. But, having again had the benefit of consultation with the ABI and BMA, I confess that I did not appreciate that the limit would also apply in other circumstances, for example, claims after death. Occasionally, an insurer will deal with a death from an illness which would normally have a long incubation period. When a death occurs from such a disease shortly after a policy has been taken out, there is a prima facie case for an investigation into whether there has been a frauduient application. I understand that an insurance company may be reluctant to pay unless a doctor confirms that the illness was not known to the patient when the policy was obtained. That raises basic conflicts with the principle of medical confidentiality. There are strong feelings on the subject in the medical profession. I have tried to steer a path through the difficulties but have to report that I have not succeeded.

It has become clear that any proposal I could make would raise extremely powerful objections from either the insurance industry or the BMA. The issue is far more complex than any other element in the Bill and it has been made clear that my pursuing the matter might jeopardise the Bill. I hope that the House understands that, in the circumstances, the wisest course is to drop clause 3(2). I am satisfied that clause 3(2) would change the law significantly and make it illegal in certain circumstances for an insurance company to contact a doctor after the death of an insured person. Omitting clause 3(2) will preserve the status quo and insurance companies will be able to contact a doctor, and doctors will be free, though not necessarily obliged, to reply.

1 pm

Amendment No. 5 partly reflects the new time limits that I have mentioned. The hon. Member for Ealing, North tabled amendment No. 13. Clause 7 requires a doctor to keep a medical report for five years after it has been sent to the employer or insurer. A medical report is drawn up for a specific purpose. It is not a medical record. I hope that the House is not labouring under any confusion about the two. A medical report is much more finely focused. Clause 7 requires an excessive period of retention. The need is to ensure that someone who has been turned down for a job or insurance should be able to establish whether information or a misjudgment on the report was responsible. That need should arise at or shortly after the time when the application is turned down. Amendment No. 10 would reduce to six months the time for which a report should be kept.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the distinction between a medical record and a medical report. In the light of his long conversations with insurers and others, can he confirm that a medical report's purpose is to establish whether an individual is basically fit and free of illness or disease? Will he confirm that it is not a detailed investigation but a general statement?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am happy to confirm that it is not a complex in-depth medical investigation. It is, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, a statement of the applicant's fitness to undertake a job or for an insurance policy.

When the hon. Member for Ealing, North speaks to amendment No. 13, I hope that he will bear in mind the fact that a balance must be struck and that, if only for

reasons of space, the time for which reports must be kept should be reduced. It is difficult to keep reports for five years. Indeed, they may have to be filed separately. It would be unnecessarily bureaucratic to require reports to be preserved for 10 years.

Amendment No. 6 is fairly complicated. I have dealt with a substantial part of it in attempting to assuage the fears expressed by the hon. Member for Ealing, North in an intervention. The amendment contains the procedure for dealing with errors. If the patient sees the report before it is sent off and discovers that it is incorrect or misleading, he would be able to ask that it be amended. If the information was demonstrably wrong, the doctor would be obliged to amend it and there would be no difficulty about that. However, if the doctor did not accept that there was a mistake, he or she would not change the report but instead would invite the patient to provide a written statement setting out his or her view of the disputed matter. That statement would be included in the report that would go to the employer or insurer along with the doctor's report.

I stress that a patient cannot force a doctor to change his or her professional opinion or to suppress any particular facts. If there is a difference, the solution in the Bill is that both options should be set out. However, if a patient sees a report and decides that it is wholly unacceptable he could prevent the report from being supplied. That is the effect of subsection (3) in amendment No. 6. I accept that that may jeopardise his or her prospects of securing the insurance policy or the job, but it is right that an individual should have the freedom to make such a decision.

Finally, new clause 2 seeks to provide a basic mechanism for enforcement. The Bill is deficient in terms of the sanctions available to individuals under the new rights that it provides. If an individual considers that an employer, an insurer or a doctor is failing to comply with any of the Bill's requirements, he or she can apply under new clause 2 to the courts for an order to ensure compliance. That is an appropriate way to deal with the enforcement provisions.

I apologise to the Committee for detaining it at some length on this group of amendments which make substantial changes to the Bill that received a formal Second Reading. Therefore, it was only fair and proper that the Committee should spend a moment or two considering some of the consequences that flow from this set of amendments.

The amendments are the fruit of substantial consultation. They strengthen and clarify the Bill and I hope that they will find favour with the Committee.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I greatly respect the care with which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) has prepared the Bill and all the research and discussion that lies behind it and the amendments. I know that his interest is deep and genuine and that the Bill follows up his work in the House on other matters.

I am worried that implicit in the amendments is a right for, indeed an invitation to, a patient to disagree with the doctor and to invite him to change an opinion to which, presumably he will have given due consideration and careful thought, backed up with a medical examination.

Under the amendments, the patient has the right to say to a doctor, "I do not accept what you, Mr. Professional Doctor, say about me in the important matter of my fitness to be insured in the way that I seek to be insured, or for the employment or the job that I seek. I do not agree with your medical assessment. After your seven years of medical training, all your experience in hospitals and the rest, I John Bloggs or Harry Greenway say that you are wrong." If a patient says to his doctor, "I cannot agree with you" he is telling his doctor that he is wrong. I do not say that an individual has no right to tell his doctor that he is wrong, but his opinion is based on a hunch or an idea. We have to beware of the slim knowledge that all of us who are not doctors have of medical and other related matters.

We may have views about psychological matters, such as behavioural problems, a similarly expert question, but teachers with a good deal of expertise in child behaviour and child psychology might find themselves in difficulty if they challenged the careful assessment of a psychologist.

I shall not seek to divide the House, but I am fundamentally opposed to the amendments. The hon. Gentleman says that an individual should be able to say that he does not accept a doctor's medical report. He may accept the good intentions of the doctor's report, but to challenge it means that he does not accept it. In those circumstances, a more satisfactory solution would be for the patient to say that he intends to seek a second opinion.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman says that to challenge a medical report would not be to question the good intentions of the medical practitioner, but that is not an accurate description of what the relationship should be between a patient and his doctor. The medical report is a matter of judgment. The doctor will consult the medical records and perhaps examine the patient, after which it becomes a matter of judgment.

As it is a matter of judgment, if the patient does not share that judgment he should be able to say to his doctor that he has got it wrong. That is the purpose of the Bill. If the doctor disagrees with him, he should be able to say to the patient, "I shall put a note to that effect on your records, but I think you are wrong." I see nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Greenway: This is a semantic argument. The hon. Gentleman referred to a disagreement. I used the word "challenge", which is a parliamentary term and it may be too strong a word for what we hope will be a modest disagreement. If a doctor said to his patient, "You have cancer" and the patient's reply was, "I do not", that amounts to challenge. There are people who are told that they have cancer, but who, somehow, know that they do not. There can be disagreement or challenge on as big a matter as that, but that is not what we are dealing with.

We are dealing with a small disagreement or a small challenge about what a doctor says in a medical report that is necessary for insurance or employment. A patient who is dissatisfied with a report prepared by his doctor should be able to say to him, "I have nothing against you personally, but I intend to seek a second opinion." That is how it should be handled, rather than there being an argument between the doctor and the individual about the contents of the report.

Mr. Corbett: I should like the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) to help me with a matter that follows from the remarks of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that we are talking about medical reports that are prepared

[Mr. Corbett]

for a specific purpose at the request of an employer or insurance company. The reports will make judgments based on medical records held by a doctor, but not all those records may necessarily have been prepared and kept by that doctor. Someone may have moved and their records may have followed when that move involved a change of doctor.

I do not understand why the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire thought that it would not be necessary to keep a copy of the report. It will be compiled from records and may involve a medical examination. I should have thought that the copy would be a proper part of a patient's medical records and I cannot foresee a GP not wanting to keep a copy, as it would be part of a package of the patient's medical records.

1.15 pm

I should like further to ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about medical practitioners being able to decline to disclose what is in the report where he or she is of the opinion that it is likely to cause serious harm to the physical or mental health of the individual. I do not want to start a semantic argument about the difference between harm and serious harm, but amendment No. 7 worries me because the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire wants to insert:

"or would indicate the intentions of the practitioner in respect of the individual."

I accept that clause 6 is a difficult part of the Bill. It argues about patient's access to reports, and in that regard it is opening another door, but it says that when a medical practitioner properly makes a judgment that door will be slammed shut. I am not sure that the amendment properly deals with that matter.

We must assume that there is a reasonable relationship between the patient and GP. If either side does not like the relationship it has the right to end it. The GP can say, "On your bike" and the patient can say, "I am dissatisfied with you, so I shall find another doctor." What will happen when a doctor looks at the patient's medical records and thinks, "Blimey O'Reilly, if I put that in the report and show it to the patient it will cause serious harm"? Let us suppose that it will cause serious mental or emotional harm. What will happen? Is the GP expected to communicate the contents of the record to the patient? I suspect not, judging by amendment No. 7. When patient and GP come face to face, the patient will say, "will you please let me see a copy of the report that you propose to send to the insurance company?" The doctor will say, "No I cannot do that." The patient will ask, "Why not?" the doctor will reply, "I cannot tell you." The doctor is acting quite properly because the Bill allows disclosre to be withheld where it would be likely to cause serious harm. So the patient persists and says, "Why can't you tell me?" and the doctor says, "I just can't tell you." That leaves a great yawning chasm. It could be interpreted as mistrust at its best, and the patient may feel something akin to deep and terrifying despair and think, "My godfathers, I have a dreadful disease and will drop dead at the end of next week and that is why the GP is not telling me." Of course, that will be rare and, I hope, would occur only in extreme cases. However, it is an interesting point.

The Bill is all about access and one would hope that the GP, in the difficult circumstances in which he or she reached the conclusion that to reveal a report would be likely to cause serious harm, would want a relationship with the patient that would enable him or her to indicate in some way why such action was being taken.

I have to say rapidly to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and the Committee that I think that I have uncovered the problem, but I do not know what the answer is.

Mrs. Currie: Is that not just typical of the Labour party?

I have listened to the exchanges of the past few minutes with a great deal of interest. It would probably help the Committee if I told my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that this is a limited Bill and that much of what he was concerned about is being discussed elsewhere in the efforts we are making to try to achieve voluntary agreements between the Government and the medical profession. Perhaps I should also warn the Committee that I have been a little reluctant to commit a great deal of officials' time, particularly scarce parliamentary counsels' time, to ensuring that every "t" is crossed and every "i" is dotted. I wanted to wait to see whether the Bill made progress. Should it be the will of the Committee and the House that it should so do, I shall try before it reaches the other place, to ensure that some of the necessary tidying up is attended to. We would not wish to see a Bill go on the statute book that could cause anyone major difficulties.

As I understand it—this is my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North—the Bill covers the following possibilities. An individual seeks insurance or renewal of insurance or is involved in an existing or potential contract of employment and in order to maintain or promote that contract, the insurer or employer asks for a medical report. The requester—the employer or insurer—must under the Bill and the amendments before us notify in writing the individual concerned, who for these purposes we should call "the patient". If the patient wants to see the report, he has to say so in writing and quickly. If he does not like it, he can change it and prevent it from being sent. I am looking to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) to see that I have got that right because it is quite complex stuff.

I can well understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North, but I shall offer him a rather different anecdote, which shows why I am increasingly minded to be sympathetic to moves to open up access to medical records. Not long ago I went to the family practitioner committee in my neighbourhood. It has very good people and has recently computerised its records. It proudly punched up my cervical smear test record and said, "You have not had one for ages. You are due for one now." I said, "But you haven't got any of my cervical cancer smear test records on your computer, I had one as recently as—" and I gave the date. It punched more buttons and the computer record was a total blank.

The reason for that was that it had the wrong NHS number. It had one digit wrong. I knew that and I was probably the only person in the entire country who did. It had punched in "LNUN" instead of "LNVN". That was clearly a mistake in somebody's handwriting, possibly one that had been around for a long time.

It is valuable for a patient who is concerned about accuracy and about ensuring that it is his medical record that has been examined to have the right of access. If,

however, he prevents the document from being sent, the insurer or the employer will know and can draw conclusions. If the patient is content or does not bother about it and the report goes to the insurer or employer and perhaps produces an adverse reaction, he will still have the right to see the document, but only within a time limit. Under the amendment, the limit will be six months, and we may debate later whether to have a longer period. It is reasonable to have a time limit.

This is not a debate about general access to medical records. It is about an individual's need to know what is said about him or her in a particular document in which he or she has a strong pecuniary interest. It is not a small matter because we may be talking about the possibility of a person losing his job or about someone who is unable to get car insurance to allow him to drive. It is not a small matter to someone like me. I am an asthmatic and, in the past, have been offered insurance only at much increased rates. I regard myself as generally rather fit and I have not had an attack in a long time. I would challenge such attitudes. I can envisage circumstances in which an individual's entire life is affected by an individual report on an individual occasion which is not accurate, not full enough or about the wrong person. That can happen in families in my sort of constituency where father and son frequently have the same name.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although we are not talking about medical reports, we are talking about a medical snapshot at a given time? If we are not, what are we talking about?

Mrs. Currie: That is right, but, as I am not the Bill's promoter, I am sure that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will respond. The individual is not an innocent, uninterested bystander. A potential pecuniary contract is involved. It is wise to allow a person access to a report which could substantially affect his livelihood. That is why we do not seek to oppose the Bill.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) referred to "serious harm", which as he knows is the wording in other legislation. From time immemorial, patient records have been regarded as belonging to the doctor. In the current state of the law there is no way that a patient can gain access to those records. The doctor has an absolute veto over them. Surely, in a world of intelligent, educated people, that cannot be right. It no longer fits in with our general view that the patient is a co-operative animal in the treatment of his condition. Every effort should be made to win his co-operation to provide him with information about his condition. The more people live long, happy and fruitful lives, even with chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes, the more it makes sense to move in this general direction.

I was interested to hear the remarks of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the co-operation of the Association of British Insurers. I am sure that it is in insurers' interest to get accurate reports. It is in the interests of all of us, since we pay the insurance rates, that insurers should not take inordinate risks that will fall on the rest of us. If this proposal becomes law, guidance will be issued. It will not be instituted by the Government, as this is not a Government Bill, but will be issued, I understand, by the medical profession through the British Medical Association. The Government stand ready to assist in drawing up guidelines.

The Bill is somewhat vague. If I may offer the faintest hint of criticism of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, it is that I am surprised that, after years of debating these matters, he originally put on the Table a Bill which made a number of well-meaning and well-sounding comments but did not give any power or teeth to what he intended doing. I am sure that, because of the discussions in recent weeks, some of those points will be put right.

Amendment No. 3 ensures that employers and insurers will advise individuals in writing of their right to have access to a medical report, but it puts the onus on the individual to make the necessary arrangements with the medical practitioner within 21 days of notification that a report has been requested. That seems sensible.

The amendment provides for access to a report within six months of its supply to the employer or the insurer. It gives the individual the right to amend or notify a report that is considered to be inaccurate or misleading and to prevent a report from being sent to an employer or an insurance company. The amendment also provides that individuals should be advised that if they wish to have access to a report they should make known in writing their desire to do so. In other words, the amendment sets out clearly the gateways through which the individual must pass. It spells out the rights that form the cornerstone of the Bill.

1.30 pm

I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about the validity of consent. The amendment deletes any reference to validity of consent lasting for 90 days, as originally suggested. It is interesting to hear the views of the Association of British Insurers and the British Medical Association on this matter, and the amendment maintains the status quo. However, between now and the Bill's arrival in another place, the hon. Gentleman might like to give more thought to the matter. Although 90 days was too restrictive, a time limit of some kind might be desirable. I offer him merely the thought—it is not a recommendation—that the legislation requiring prescriptions to be offered before spectacles can be issued refers to a validity period of two years. That seems wise, as a person's health can change during that period, and beyond that period we would expect a further prescription to be called for. But if the hon. Gentleman makes progress, perhaps he will devote his time and attention to such issues.

New clause 1 provides that if the individual makes no arrangements to see the report, the practitioner may pass it on. It also provides a necessary time scale by which action is to be taken.

We regard amendment No. 5 as an improvement to the Bill, because it provides that people have the right of access by making an application within a time period—in this case six months. That right was lacking in the Bill as originally drafted and without it individuals would not have been able to find whether errors had been made in the original report.

Amendment No. 6 provides the right to amend or modify an inaccurate or misleading report and inserts the right for an individual to withhold consent—a further deficiency in the Bill as originally drafted.

The Government believe that the amendments represent a considerable improvement on the rather vague drafting that was originally placed before us and would preserve the intentions of the Bill if the House wishes it to proceed.

Mr. Kirkwood: I crave the indulgence of the Committee. I have listened carefully to the debate, which has been both instructive and constructive. As the Minister said, some of the issues are being discussed in other places on other more substantial legislation. I am sure that the subject referred to by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) will raise its head during our discussions, and I am sure also that both he and I will want to keep an eye on the matter. I assure him that I shall weigh very carefully his remarks as well as the Minister's helpful recommendation and her comment that the Government will assist and try to clear up some of the vaguer aspects of the Bill. In my own defence, I remind the House that we are all amateurs when it comes to parliamentary draftsmanship. We need to strike a balance between the violence that is done to the English language and the clarity of legislation; but perhaps that balance is not right in the Bill as drafted and I am happy to accept the Government's kind offer to assist us.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) raised some substantial issues. Matters such as the freedom of retention of documents were gone into in some detail with the BMA and other bodies. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that when one is ninth or 10th in the private Member's ballot one is not really master of one's own destiny. The hon. Gentleman spent much time constructively criticising the Access to Personal Files Bill, which I introduced last year. The same applies this year, but more so. My position is even less strong than it was last year. I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept that we shall pay close attention to what he said and seek to make adjustments in the other place if the measure finds favour with the Committee. If the Committee is prepared to accept the amendments, we shall pay careful attention to all that has been said.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I was most interested in what the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Minister said. Although this is a small measure, I enunciated an important principle. If the hon. Gentleman will give an assurance that he will pay attention to that principle, I shall be happy.

Mr. Kirkwood: I give that assurance. If we had more time, I believe that I could give substantial reassurance to the hon. Gentleman. I shall seek to do so at some other time or place. I hope the Committee will feel that these important and complicated amendments, vague though they may be, have been properly discussed and will allow them to pass.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4 disagreed to.

Clause 5

Giving of Access

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 2, line 12, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

'(a) make available to the individual for inspection—

(i) within the period specified in subsection (2) or subsection (3) of section (Access before supply of report) above a copy of a medical report relating to that individual which the practitioner intends to supply for employment or insurance purposes; or

(ii) a copy of a medical report relating to that individual which the practitioner has supplied for employment or insurance purposes within the previous six months.'.

No. 6, in line 17, at end insert—

'(2) Where an individual notifies a medical practitioner that a medical report which the practitioner intends to supply for employment or insurance purposes contains information which in the individual's opinion is incorrect or misleading the practitioner shall:

(a) if the information is incorrect or misleading, amend the report accordingly;

(b) if the practitioner does not accept that the information is incorrect or misleading, invite the individual to prepare a statement in writing setting out his or her views in relation to the disputed information and the practitioner shall attach any such statement to any report relating to the individual which is supplied for employment or insurance purposes.

(3) Where an individual has had access to a report which a medical practitioner intends to supply for employment or insurance purposes the practitioner shall, notwithstanding any consent given under section 3 above, refrain from supplying the report until such time as the individual has given written consent for the report to be supplied.'.—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

Exemptions

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 21, at end insert—

'or would indicate the intentions of the practitioner in respect of the individual'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendments Nos. 8 and 9.

Mr. Kirkwood: I can deal with these amendments very briefly. They are designed to bring the Bill into line with the Data Protection Act 1984. Some Members may feel, as I do, that that Act has some way to go before it can be regarded as a model disclosure Act. The Government have stressed, however—quite properly, in my view—the need for single common standards for disclosure, particularly in the limited area of medical information. I have sought to improve on the Data Protection Act, but I accept that it would not be helpful to have two conflicting sets of complicated rules.

Amendment No. 7 adopts the basic premise found in section 1(3) of the Data Protection Act, which rules that while an opinion is disclosable an expression of intention is not. I fully accept that. Amendment No. 8 deletes a minor divergence from the standard laid down in the Data Protection Act about access to health records. Amendment No. 9 adopts the exemption on national security grounds contained in that Act and specifies identical procedures.

Mrs. Currie: When we considered the Bill in detail we found one or two slight difficulties. For example, information relating to national security could have been released in a way that was possibly not desirable. We drew the hon. Gentleman's attention to those deficiencies and we are pleased that he has tabled amendments Nos. 7, 8 and 9, which not only achieve consistency with the Data Protection Act, but, in one or two cases, will possibly be very much in the national interest. We are therefore glad to see the amendments and do not oppose them.

Mr. Corbett: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's comments about single common standards, but amendment No. 9 is unacceptable. With regard to the Data Protection Act, single common standards are all right only if the standards themselves are all right.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the Government wish to extract from the Data Protection Act this kind of cover for material, the release of which, it is said, would jeopardise national security. Perhaps the Minister will explain exactly where this might lead. The hon. Lady will know that a judgment was delivered yesterday, affecting a group of ex-service men and women, who, as part of their service, were forced to take part, in the sense of witnessing, in tests with nuclear weapons in Australia about 25 years ago. The result of that judgment is that they are now free to sue the Crown for what they say are diseases caused by having to undertake those duties.

I can imagine a Minister of the Crown getting a piece of paper and writing, "I say that the release of that information would jeopardise national security", then handing it to a general practitioner, and saying, "That is secret, because I say that it is secret." That is what the amendment allows the general practitioner or medical practitioner to do. At least those ex-service men and women can now go to court. One hopes that the Government will see the sense of trying to deal with that matter more sensibly, but that is up to them. However, if Ministers could have taken the action that I have just described, that information may never have come out. It could have been buried, locked deep away in a doctor's file. I hope that the Minister will not try to persuade the Committee that nobody would ever do that.

Unhappily, the clause could be used restrictively by Ministers. I do not doubt that they would do it with their hands on their hearts and say that they were right, but that would not make it right. I cannot for the life of me see the need for this measure in the context of medical reports. What, in a medical report, could jeopardise national security?

We should remember that access to medical reports is for employment or insurance purposes. Will the fact that I occasionally suffer from corns jeopardise national security? Probably not. Let us imagine that I have a disease which at the moment is incurable, but with which I can cope because I have medication to help me. If a doctor states such facts about an individual in a medical report, in what possible circumstances would a Cabinet Minister come down the road on a great charger, waving a bit of paper, and saying, "Keep that quiet. If they found out about that in the Kremlin, all hell would be let loose."?

Never mind the other arguments about the Data Protection Act 1984; we are talking about opinions and judgments formed on the basis of facts. Medical records overwhelmingly record the facts of a patient's health over the years. It is a fact that I broke my elbow at the start of the general election in 1979. I am quite clumsy. The Minister will no doubt rib me about that later. It is a fact that I started last new year by tripping over a kerbstone, which I did not see, falling against a wall and cracking a couple of ribs. That is a medical fact, which will be on my medical records. I hope that everything else on my medical records are matters of medical fact.

Medical records also record treatment. One goes into the surgery complaining about belly ache or whatever, there is an examination, a bit of chat, "Take this" or "Do not take the other", one is told to stop eating this, that or the other. That treatment is recorded in the medical record. As we have said, those records are gone through for report purposes. There may or may not be an examination, but a report is drawn up. Because the circumstances outlined in amendment No. 9 relate to facts and do not deal with anything other than opinions and judgments formed on the basis of those facts, what use is that information for insurance purposes? The sort of questions asked are: "Is the applicant in reasonably good health? Yes/No. Has the applicant suffered from any major illness or disease during the past . . . years? Yes/No. If yes, give details."

1.45 pm

I understand why the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) had to table the amendment. I hope that he will forgive me for phrasing it that way. It was not his idea. The Minister's paw prints are all over it. I am making a song and dance about it because the Home Secretary has promised us a White Paper on reforming the Official Secrets Act by the end of next month. I bet that any new Act will be as restrictive as the current Act, but more smartly written. When we object to the sort of provision contained in the amendment being part of the Official Secrets Act mark II, the Home Secretary will say, "What is all the fuss about? It is already contained in the Access to Medical Records Bill and the Data Protection Act, so I am doing nothing new. What are you worried about?" That is the danger.

This amendment is taking a mighty big Exocet to impose a small provision. I cannot envisage any circumstances in which it could possibly be justified.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I wish to allay the fears expressed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). Someone might enter a sensitive job in the security services with a serious health problem. Should that be known? There may be circumstances in which it might help the security of the state for that fact not to be made broadly known.

Mr. Kirkwood: What?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman might express surprise, but it all depends on the circumstances. Such a health problem should certainly be known to a prospective employer. It is the use of that information from that point onwards that is in question. In certain circumstances, the security of the state could be at risk, so I support the amendment.

Mrs. Currie: When it comes to firing Exocets, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) has just shown us how it is done. I wonder how much advice he has sought from his many hon. Friends who have actively supported improved access to information, especially to medical records. Indeed, on many occasions they have been more active supporters than the Government. The hon. Gentleman's words were not really part of today's debate, but part of a quite different debate that he may seek to have through the usual channels. If he felt so strongly about the matter, I am surprised that he did not discuss it with the Bill's sponsor or make any effort to verify the status of the amendment.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the people who yesterday were granted the right to sue the Government, but I am sure that he does not expect me to comment on

[Mrs. Currie]

that. He should remember that the Bill seeks to increase, not diminish, access to information. Perhaps he should give further thought to whether he wants to jeopardise its passage in the way that his strong words have suggested, and also to whether it would be appropriate to do that today.

We asked for amendments Nos. 7, 8 and 9 to be included partly because it is wise and sensible not to have a wide diversity of legislation on similar issues. It makes sense to have legislation on similar issues. It has long been the Government's view—whichever colour the Government happens to be—that it is wise to include a provision that, where national security might be involved, there should be an exclusion. That has long been the practice. As a student I well recall spending many hours listening to the row between Mr. Wilson and the D Notice Committee. Efforts were then made of a similar kind, perhaps unnecessarily. We firmly believe that national security issues are likely to arise in relation to medical reports only on extremely rare occasions. Therefore, it is in the interests of the individuals concerned, and perhaps hon. Members, that the clause should be inserted. If the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have such strong views on that topic—observing the Opposition Benches, it does not look as though the other 220-odd Labour Members share his views—they may take them up in debates on that topic elsewhere or at different times. It may well be that if the Bill proceeds in its passage today, they may wish to take them up in the other place. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman may like to take some proper advice about it. It is for the promoter of the Bill to decide whether the amendment should stand or be withdrawn. It is our view that it improves the Bill. We would wish to take further advice if the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) wants to withdraw it.

Mr. Kirkwood: This has been an interesting debate. All things being equal, and if I were in charge of the legislative programme of Her Majesty's Government, the wording of the clause, and particularly that of amendment No. 9, is not what I would have wanted. I assure the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that it is the most acceptable agreement that could be reached in the time available. I hope that he will continue to discuss this important matter, but not in Committee this afternoon.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 2, line 28, leave out paragraph (b).

No. 9, in line 33, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) A medical practitioner shall not disclose to an individual any part of a medical report containing information whose disclosure a Minister of the Crown has determined would jeopardise national security; and a certificate signed by a Minister of the Crown certifying that a disclosure would jeopardise national security shall be conclusive evidence of the fact.

(4) The powers conferred by subsection (3) above on a Minister of the Crown shall not be exercisable except by a Minister who is a member of the Cabinet or by the Attorney General or the Lord Advocate.

(5) This section shall not be construed as excusing a practitioner from making available to an individual so much of a medical report as may be made available without causing serious harm or indicating the practitioner's intentions as mentioned in subsection (1) above or without revealing the information or identity mentioned in subsection (2) above or without disclosing the information mentioned in subsection (3) above.'.—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Clause 6, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

RETENTION OF REPORTS

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 2, line 40, leave out 'five years' and insert 'six months'.—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

No. 13, in line 40, leave out 'five' and insert 'ten'.—*[Mr. Greenway.]*

No. 11, in line 42, leave out subsections (2) and (3).—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Clause 7, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 8

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 3, line 9, leave out 'extends' and insert 'does not extend'.

I understand that matters such as those proposed in the Bill will be dealt with properly in Northern Ireland by making an Order in Council, hence the need for the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 1

ACCESS BEFORE SUPPLY OF REPORT

'(1) Where an individual has given written notice in accordance with section 3(1)(c) above to a person seeking a medical report indicating that he or she wishes to have access to a report before it is supplied by a medical practitioner the person shall not apply to a practitioner for such a report unless he or she has—

(a) notified the individual in writing that a medical report is being sought and that the report will be made available to the individual by the practitioner before being supplied provided that the individual arranges for such access within twenty one days of the notification referred to in this paragraph being given;

(b) notified the medical practitioner in writing that the individual wishes to have access to the report before it is supplied and of the date on which the notification referred to in paragraph (a) above was given and of the practitioner's obligation to refrain from supplying the report in accordance with subsection (2) below.

(2) Where a medical practitioner has received notification under subsection (1)(b) above the practitioner shall refrain from supplying a report for a period of twenty one days from the date on which the notification referred to in subsection (1)(a) was given unless the individual has been given access within that period.

(3) Where a medical practitioner has not received notification under subsection (1)(b) above but before supplying the report has been notified by the individual in writing that the individual wishes to have access to the report before it is supplied the practitioner shall refrain from supplying a report for a period of twenty one days from the date on which the individual gave notification unless the individual has been given access within that period.'.—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

APPLICATION TO THE COURT

'(1) An individual who considers that a person has failed, or who has reasonable grounds to consider that a person is likely to fail, to comply with any requirement of this Act in relation to a medical report containing information about the individual may apply to the court and the court may order the person to take such steps as are necessary to comply.

(2) The jurisdiction conferred by this section shall be exercisable by a county court or, in Scotland, by the sheriff.'. —*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Bill, as amended, to be reported.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Order for Third Reading read.

1.54 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This is an important measure and I am grateful for the forbearance shown in its early stage. It had a formal Second Reading. Today's debate has been of considerable assistance to me.

This is an important advance which to some extent is the consequence of my private Member's Bill which I introduced last year. There are continuing arguments about access to medical records, as opposed to medical reports, and I have been substantially encouraged by the Minister during both the early stages and today's proceedings. The Government's attitude is always crucial to any private Member's Bill, and I have been especially fortunate in that respect. I have greatly appreciated the helpful and positive spirit in which the Minister has approached the Bill and our discussions. I extend that commendation to those to whom we are never supposed to refer—the officials in the DHSS.

The BMA has supported the principle of the Bill from the outset. I am grateful to it for that, for the considerable time that a great many of its staff have devoted to helping me with the fine detail, and for their practical suggestions which have improved it. I acknowledge the contribution of the ABI, which expressed anxiety about some of the Bill's implications. I have tried to be as helpful as possible on those points and it is now satisfied that the measure is workable. The Bill has benefited as a result.

As the House will recognise, the Bill comes from a fairly familiar stable—the freedom of information campaign. Finally, I wish to pay tribute to its members and their energetic and resourceful director, Mr. Maurice Frankle, who has been ever present at my side. I hope that the House will give the Bill its Third Reading. If so, I look forward to taking the opportunity in the other place of tidying it up and tabling any technical amendments that may be necessary.

1.56 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway: I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on steering this complex and important Bill towards the statute book.

This morning I received a letter telling me that an insurance policy that I took out years ago and had forgotten about matures next week. I shall be the richer for it.

Mr. Kirkwood: The drinks are on the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Greenway: The drinks are on the Bill's promoter. It is interesting that I did not have to have a medical for that insurance policy and I have never had to have a medical for any other insurance. I have had one medical for employment purposes and that was 31 years ago, although I have had several jobs since. So I wonder how much the Bill will be applied. We are talking more about an important and valuable principle than about what will be a widespread practice.

The general principle of giving people access to medical records is in tune with the times, in the spirit of freedom to see what is written about one and people's ability to receive medical information about themselves which they could not take previously. Many people can be told that they have a fatal illness who could not have taken being told that years ago. I hope that nobody will receive such information as the result of a medical report for insurance or employment purposes.

It is some years since the Inner London education authority established the principle that teachers should have the right to see reports written about them for employment purposes. Much can rightly be said about the inadiquacies of ILEA. I supported its abolition, although I have reservations about it. That principle was as important as that which is enshrined in the Bill, and was analogous to it. It gave teachers the right to see what was written about them. It helped to improve relationships between heads and teachers working with and for them and between teachers, inspectors and others concerned with the education service. As a result, children have benefited.

I believe that people at work and those who want to insure themselves, as I have been able to do with the happy result that I have mentioned, will be helped by the Bill.

2 pm

Mr. Corbett: I have been critical of parts of the Bill, for reasons which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) understands. I congratulate him on getting this far and hope that the House will give the Bill a Third Reading so that it might go to the other place and reach the statute book.

It is a shame that we have to advance at a snail's pace, step by tiny step along the road to more freedom of information. It is a pity that the Government do not yet understand the need for a proper freedom of information Act to open doors which remain locked for no good reason and to enable and encourage citizens to play a much fuller part in our democracy on the basis of much greater knowledge of what is going on.

That remains an ambition. I am sure that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will be with me when I say that I hope that if the Bill reaches the statute book, it will not be regarded as an end. It should be a spur to those of us on both sides of the House who want the repeal and rewriting of the Official Secrets Act and the arguments turned on their head. The present arrangements should be swept aside. There should be a presumption in favour of people knowing more about what is going on and on what basis decisions are taken by the Government and others.

People should know why decisions are taken and have the information on which they are based. Such decisions

[Mr. Corbett]

have a large and often lasting effect on the lives, welfare and fortunes of every citizen in these islands. I hope that the House will allow the Bill to proceed.

2.2 pm

Mrs. Currie: I am not sure that I accept the criticism of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) about the Government's view on freedom of information. He was not in Birmingham when I was involved in social services there. I felt strongly that access to social services records was important, but it was a social worker who went to court and tried to stop us. The case ended up in another place where, many years later, I was vindicated. The hon. Gentleman knows my views on these matters.

Today's progress with the Bill helps the Government in their discussions elsewhere. We are always keen for progress to be made voluntarily. Satisfactory resolution of complex issues such as those that have been raised today relies on co-operation and agreement. Such legislation is not workable without the willing consent of all concerned.

The Bill has been much improved in Committee, so we do not oppose its Third Reading. We look forward to seeing what progress it makes elsewhere.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Medical Examination of Children at Risk Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.4 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

My purpose in bringing forward the Bill is to attempt to introduce a simple specific measure for the protection of children while recognising the understandable rights of parents. It seeks to provide a tool for social workers and health visitors who carry the onerous responsibility of protecting children, making their work easier and more effective.

It remains a challenge to us all at a time of rising prosperity and improved housing, health care and education, that there remain about 200 children a year who lose their lives at the hands of their parents or guardians, and a further 30,000 children on local authority at-risk registers.

Child abuse is not a simple homogenous phenomenon. It may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, or child neglect. The debates and the outcry in our newspapers range from fury that there are not more intrusive and draconian measures to remove children from their homes, to the debate surrounding the Cleveland case, suggesting that the workers were overzealous and acted too swiftly.

My measure addresses both ends of the spectrum. It is a limited measure which will ensure that a child is seen without summarily removing it from the family home. I should like to place the Bill in the context of other developments trying to tackle the scourge of child abuse. The Home Office has an important role. The recent improvements where children are able to provide evidence by means of a video link and their evidence need not necessarily be corroborated by an adult must make sense. There is no evidence to suggest that children are inherently less truthful than adults. Of course, the appalling situation in which the court appearance was at least as traumatic as the original abuse must be counteracted.

There should be tougher penalties for those responsible for harming children, although that has to be seen in the context that the vast majority of abuses take place within the family and that there will be problems involving the reporting of offences if we develop an increasingly punitive atmosphere in which they are discussed.

It is also important that more information about the criminal record of those who work with children should be provided. However, the investigation, the prosecution and the punishment play a small part in comparison with the importance of improving prevention. The Department of Education has taken steps to improve the training of teachers and their skills in detecting child abuse. There are plans for preparation for parenthood programmes and educational programmes encouraging children not to talk to strangers. However, the primary responsibility must lie with the DHSS. In the light of successive inquiries and concern, it has introduced a series of welcome initiatives.

Since the Maria Colwell inquiry 15 years ago, there have been 35 inquiries into cases where children have lost their lives. Each inquiry has repeated the need for agencies to work together. I hope that the DHSS will bring forward its guidelines about working together. Of course, the community and the various professions involved have a

part to play. Similarly, there are attempts to standardise inquiry procedures. Child abuse inquiries have often been horrifically expensive and unedifying occasions. Frequently they have been witch hunts where the professional workers, parents, friends and anyone associated have been denigrated and villified with little constructive outcome.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend was wrong to use words such as "witch hunt". The Cleveland inquiry was in my constituency and I find that remark offensive. The inquiry sought to discover the truth. Mrs. Justice Butler-Sloss was magnificent in the chair. Such remarks are intemperate and I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw them.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has made an important point. The Cleveland inquiry was very different from other inquiries into incidents where children lost their lives. By no means did I mean to imply that the leaders of the inquiry had conducted themselves in such a way. Mrs. Justice Butler-Sloss and Louis Blom-Cooper have been models in trying to combine the various interests and provide a considered report in an atmosphere of great heat. Often it is the press treatment of the individuals involved that has been particularly unedifying. All of us would hope to find a way of dealing with these appalling cases without necessarily establishing a laborious machinery for doing so. As for my hon. Friend's example of the Cleveland inquiry, my hon. Friend the Minister is to be congratulated on acting so firmly in setting up a statutory inquiry into what seems to be an idiosyncratic set of circumstances that relate to a problem that has only recently come to light.

The maintenace of national statistics is a further important development. Problems can now be analysed and assessed in their proper and considered context. In his Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act 1986 my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) improved the rights of parents and grandparents and made it possible for regulations to be made to cover those who are at home under a care order. In the case of both Tyra Henry and Jasmine Beckford there was a care order in place; the children were the responsibility of the local authority, yet they slipped through the net. We eagerly await action to implement the remainder of the measures that are provided for in my hon. Friend's Act.

Training is fundamental. Initiatives have been taken, but I remain doubtful about the full effect of the Seebohm report, which recommends that all social workers should be generic. Special skills, training and knowledge are fundamental when dealing with cases of child abuse and child neglect. Increased resources have been made available for the personal social services, and inevitably the problems of an ever-increasing elderly population take up more and more time. There should be specially trained and skilled social workers, with supervision and clear line management guidance to deal with cases of child abuse. Training needs to be given to deal with the confusing multiplicity of orders available.

A point that emerged from the Kimberley Carlile inquiry was that the power to issue a warrant is not widely recognised. I am pleased that the DHSS responded so swiftly by clarifying the section 40 warrant procedure under the 1933 Act. A comprehensive review of the legislative framework is needed, and much work has been done on that. The White Paper "The Law on Child Care and Family Services" recommends many improvements to the legislation dealing with child protection. It recognises the rights of parents and recommends that the powers of social workers should be clarified and improved. However, the White Paper does not cover adequately the need for medical assessment. A major recommendation in the White Paper is the introduction of an emergency protection order. If there are worries about a child's safety apart from the section 40 warrant the only provision is a place of safety order. That means removing the child from home. Under the emergency protection order, removal would take place when it was reasonable to believe that damage to the child's health or well-being was likely unless the child could immediately be removed from home and kept in a place of safety. It is time limited to eight days and gives greater power to the parents, but it provides for the removal of the child. The important point for the protection of children, for the respect of parental rights and for the use of the power by social workers in my Bill is that it requires the child to be seen, but it expressly does not provide the power to remove the child from the home. Recently, the Family Rights Group's solicitor, Katherine Gieve, wrote about the order. She said:

"the Family Rights Group's experience suggests that it would be preferable to distinguish clearly the search for evidence of abuse from the need for a child to be removed from a dangerous situation. These two may run side by side, but they may not: a child should not be summarily removed from home in order to find out if there is a risk in being there."

The Bill gives social workers and health visitors power to ensure that a child is seen. It is extraordinary that many children who lost their lives were not seen. All sorts of excuses were given about why the child could not keep an appointment or was not available at the time of contact. The clear power in the Bill will ensure that the child is properly seen, measured, weighed and assessed.

It should not be underestimated how difficult it is for a social worker to visit a family and say, "I need to see your child, and I ask you to take the child's clothes off because I must see whether the child is being neglected or injured." The social worker arrives at that home as a visitor.

A medical assessment has much broader acceptability. Medical assessments are part of our day-to-day lives. Indeed, we have just had a debate about them. For the most part, child health clinics are not threatening places. Medicals before attending school and throughout a child's life are straightforward, non-provocative occasions.

Some people have written to me in response to the Bill asking for all child health assessments to become a statutory requirement. They have suggested that child benefit should hinge on attendance at a child health clinic. I have not been convinced of the merits of that argument.

Parents' rights are considered in the Bill. The European Court of Human Rights recently decided that any parent whose access to a child is restricted can challenge that decision. The Cleveland cases have drawn attention to the fact that the parents' position must be considered. However, not only their rights but the traumatic effect of removing a child from the home must be considered.

I shall give a quotation from a letter sent by the director of the National Children's Bureau, Ronald Davie, to *The Times*. He said:

"There are many circumstances when the removal from his family of a child at risk may add further crippling emotional damage to the harm already done. There is therefore a conflict of potential risk to the child. The professional judgement

[Mrs. Bottomley]

needed in the individual case is typically complex and made no easier by the frightening consequences for the child—psychological or physical—of getting it wrong."

None of us should underestimate how difficult it is to make such judgments.

Under the Bill, parents have a right of appeal; it is rather like paying a parking ticket. They must either produce the child for a medical within the required time of three days or appear in the juvenile court or before a magistrate to explain their objections. The specification of a child health clinic, a medical centre or, if necessary, a hospital gives a certain amount of discretion to the person making the order, according to what is likely to be required by way of further tests.

Some children may require only a weighing or sighting. For others it may be necessary to have specialist paediatric help to hand, and others may need an X-ray. It is possible to require further assessment if it is necessary.

I realise that the inclusion of a health visitor and general practitioner as people who can require an order is breaking new ground. I think that the medical profession is re-evaluating its traditional code of confidentiality, and its relationship with the patient must be questioned in the light of child protection. As long ago as the Maria Colwell inquiry, the GP had a significant part to play. The GP also had a part to play in the Kimberley Carlile inquiry. It is right and proper for the medical profession to reconsider where its first duty must lie when a child's health and welfare are at risk. Similarly, an NSPCC worker is empowered to make the order, but, in my view, it would not be appropriate to include a police officer because, above all, the order will be available for children who are at risk or may be vulnerable, as opposed to a child in specific danger. A child in danger will remain the subject of emergency protection orders or a warrant.

I believe that the provision of 72 hours—three days—is a balanced move. A week is too long and 24 hours is too little. It recognises that it is at the time of assessment that a crisis within a family can be precipitated.

The Bill has received widespread support. The National Children's Bureau, National Children's Home, the Children's Society, the Association of Directors of Social Services and the British Association of Social Workers have all argued—I would not argue against it—that this should become part of comprehensive reforming legislation for our child care law. They agree that the gap needs to be filled. I should like to quote Jim Harding, the director of child care for the NSPCC. He was a member of the commission of inquiry in the Kimberley Carlile case. He said:

"This Bill will afford greater protection to children without removing them from their parents. Medical examinations and assessment could help provide evidence of child abuse but more importantly could allow for a child who has been abused or neglected to be seen and offered help . . . The need for a Medical Examination Order was emphasised by the Commission of Inquiry . . . This child's tragic death might have been avoided had such an order been available to the professional agencies involved. It will offer greater protection to the thousands of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Britain today."

I hope that the Minister will find a way to bring forward his legislation at the earliest opportunity and I hope that he will find a way to incorporate this measure, into that legislation. Whether one is concerned about excessive intrusion of workers or about their lack of action, I believe that this small, discreet and specific measure has an important part to play in respecting parents, safeguarding children and adding to the tools necessary for those charged with the responsible work of protecting the young.

2.23 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I know that the House will join me in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on the manner in which she has spoken to her Bill. The House benefits from her wide experience in social work and as a juvenile court magistrate. She has applied to the preparation and presentation of the Bill the diligence and attention to detail that does her credit.

In 1985 the NSPCC celebrated its centenary. It is sad that 100 years after the society was founded it is still necessary for it to exist. I have the honour to sit on the society's central executive committee, and I therefore see at first hand something of the wide extent of its activities. There has been a good deal of publicity recently about the sexual abuse of children. However, non-sexual, ordinary physical abuse, alas, continues. The society's literature provides details of some horrific cases.

The society can provide statistics for the thousands of known cases per year, but how many cases are unknown or undiscovered? A feature of the recent sexual abuse cases is that the publicity produced a number of adults who came forward to give details of their experiences as children—cases of which nothing was known at the time.

The extent to which parents sometimes seek help from the society is encouraging, but there are many instances when the society is given information by neighbours who are worried about what may be going on. The society's officers make further inquiries. They call at the home and, if they are allowed access, can perhaps form a view. Possibly it is necessary just to give a little help or advice. The fears may be ill-founded. If the problem is found to be serious, the officers can go to court, obtain a place of safety order, and the child is removed, but what happens if the officers cannot see the children? What happens if they are told repeatedly that the child is ill or is staying with grandparents? The social worker and NSPCC officers are faced with a dilemma—either they apply for a place of safety order on what may be flimsy and second hand evidence, and the child is removed from the home, or they ignore the situation and hope that all is well. There is no middle course. A number of recent cases have demonstrated the clear gap in the law. The Bill seeks to fill it.

Neighbours and relatives may be aware of what is happening and be anxious about whether there is child abuse, but may be hesitant to report it because they fear that the child will be taken from the home. Surely it is more likely that these cases will be reported if, as under the Bill's provisions, it will lead simply to examination of the child so that further steps can be taken or fears laid to rest.

The Kimberley Carlile inquiry recommended that an assessment order, such as is provided for in the Bill, should be available so that the child can be produced for examination, but not necessarily removed from the home. If that power had existed it might well have avoided some distressing cases, such as those which were the subject of the Cleveland inquiry.

I can confirm that the NSPCC warmly welcomes the Bill and the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for

Surrey, South-West in bringing it forward. The NSPCC thinks that an assessment order as provided for in the Bill would be helpful to social workers. We are awaiting the Cleveland report and expect a wide-ranging review of child care law and subsequent legislation to implement it, but that, of necessity, will take time. The Bill could be passed and the powers in it activated rapidly. I hope that the Government will feel able to give it their support. I hope, too, that I have allowed time for my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health to say that that is what he will do.

2.27 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): The answer to the last observation by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) is "just about", but "not very much". I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) will accept my apologies because I shall not have time to pay her the full tribute that I would otherwise have paid both to her assiduous pursuit of this matter and her experience in the many activities that give her her expertise.

To avoid my comments being cut off by the ruthless actions of the Chair, the clock, or whatever it may be before I have said much, I shall try to distil my message into some basic points.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West has acknowledged, we have put forward a range of proposals for the widespread reform of child care law because we, too accept the need for reform. As we said when I set up the Cleveland inquiry in July last year, and as we have said a number of times since, we think it right to look again at some of our proposals in the light of the outcome of that inquiry and the inquiries into the Kimberley Carlile and Tyra Henry cases in the intervening period. We do not intend to use this additional information and these additional reports as an excuse for delaying the introduction of legislation. I cannot, for reasons which the whole House understands, give any undertaking about the introduction of any particular Bill at any particular point, but it remains the Government's clear intention to get on with this as soon as possible.

We considered a proposal not dissimilar to my hon. Friend's when we were preparing the White Paper. However, we thought that on balance the emergency protection order that we proposed was the right way forward. A number of people support my hon. Friend's view that the proposal or something like it, was suggested in Louis Blom-Cooper's report on one of the child abuse cases. Therefore, I can undertake that we will re-examine the arguments, in the light of my hon. Friend's Bill, today's debate and what emerges from the Cleveland inquiry report as well as the other report, before attempting to reach a final conclusion.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Private Members' Bills

SECURITY SERVICES (PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Not moved.

PLANNING PERMISSION (DEMOLITION OF HOUSES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that there may have been a mistake. I thought that I heard the Government Whip objecting. I think that he was doing so erroneously, in the belief that the Bill would slow down planning procedures. That is not the intention of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to discuss his Bill now. I distinctly heard objections coming from a number of quarters. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dykes: Friday 17 June.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 June.

HOSPITAL CONSULTANTS (TRANSFER AND REVISION OF CONTRACTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?
No day named.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK (TOBACCO SMOKING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On behalf on the hon. Member concerned, Friday 6 May.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 May.

BLACKLISTS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Friday 6 May.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 May.

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SCOTTISH CONSTITUTION (REFERENDUM) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 6 May.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 May.

BETTING, GAMING AND LOTTERIES (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Friday 6 May.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 May.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 3rd May, the Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to the First Scottish Standing Committee may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at that hour, any Amendments which may have been selected by Mr. Speaker may then be moved, the Question thereon shall be put forthwith, and Mr. Speaker shall then put the Main Question or the Main Question, as amended.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

CORONERS BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Coroners Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, New Clauses and New Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Eastbourne General Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I welcome the opportunity to draw the attention of the House and the Minister to the number of people on the waiting list at Eastbourne general hospital and the length of time that patients have to wait before seeing a consultant and before an operation can be performed.

This debate is part of a paradox. We all know that spending on the National Health Service this year will be £23 billion—up by more than one third compared with 1979, after allowing for inflation. We know that there are 13,000 more doctors and dentists and 65,000 more nurses working for the National Health Service than there were in 1979. We know, too, that a week ago yesterday nurses were awarded a pay increase averaging 15·3 per cent., backdated to 1 April, and funded in full by the Government—or, perhaps I should say, by the taxpayer. In Eastbourne, phase 2 of our district general hospital will be complete before the end of this year and it will be operational next year.

All of that sounds—and is—most impressive. In Eastbourne, however, waiting lists have been getting bigger, and waiting times longer. I will compare the figures for December 1979 with those for March 1988, giving the number of patients on the waiting list for our district general hospital without an admission date for the key specialties.

For general surgery, the figures are 395 for 1979 and 491 for 1988; ear, nose and throat, 269 in 1979 and 561 in 1988; orthopaedics 518 in 1979 and 1,104 in 1988; ophthalmology, 69 in 1979 and 398 in 1988; oral surgery, 18 in 1979 and 175 in 1988; gynaecology, 363 in 1979 and 777 in 1988. Overall, the number of patients on the waiting list without an admission date has virtually doubled, from 2,006 in 1979 to 3,905 in 1988.

The number of patients on the waiting list is only part of the story. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, the length of time that they have to wait is far more important. The notional waiting time for ophthalmology increased from 25 weeks last year to 39 weeks this year, for gynaecology from 39 weeks last year to 58 weeks this year, and for ear, nose and throat operations it more than doubled from 26 weeks last year to 59 weeks this year. So the position has been getting worse.

It is easy to be mesmerised by statistics. The National Health Service exists, however, not to provide figures for Ministers and others to produce, but to heal the sick and, wherever possible, to prevent our people from becoming sick. I shall give two examples of the way in which those statistics actually affect my constituents. In both cases, I have been authorised to give the details to the House.

On 11 February this year, Mr. B. wrote to me as follows:

"My wife is on the waiting list for a hysterectomy operation. She went to see our GP in January 1987. He made an appointment for her to see Mr. Shardlow at the district general hospital, which she eventually did on 29th June 1987. She was told there was a waiting list of up to two years. My wife is a very patient person, and has been waiting now for almost eight months. Unlike my wife, I am not patient, and resent the fact that the quality of her life is not as it should be. In desperation, I am writing to you, hoping that in some way you can suggest something more that I can do."

On 17 February I wrote to the chairman of our district health authority. The manager of the district general hospital replied on the chairman's behalf on 25 February:

"I have discussed this with Mr. Shardlow, who is the consultant responsible for Mrs. B's care. He has confirmed that Mr. B's account of the case is accurate and that there is a wait of approximately two years for non-urgent operations."

On 1 March I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health. On 24 March, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who is to reply to this debate, explained that Eastbourne health authority had been allocated £155,000 from the waiting lists fund, which would mean that an extra 150 gynaecological operations, mostly hysterectomies, and 250 extra ear, nose and throat operations could be performed.

I sent a copy of my hon. Friend's letter to the chairman of our district health authority, who replied three days ago, on 26 April, in the following terms:

"You ask me about Mrs. Irene Barber. Regrettably, all that she says in her letter to you is correct. The earliest that it is possible to open the temporary surgical unit is the beginning of October. That unit will certainly remove a number of people from the waiting lists, but whether Mrs. Barber will be fortunate, I am unable to say, since this is a decision to be made by the consultant nearer the time. The best estimate I can give of the date on which Mrs. Barber will have her hysterectomy operation is not less than six months from now and not more than 18 months from now."

I ask my hon. Friend to note the words,

"not less than six months from now and not more than 18 months from now."

Mrs. Barber was put on the waiting list for a hysterectomy operation on 29 June 1987—10 months ago today. Even if her operation is carried out midway between the dates given to me by the chairman of the district health authority, she will have been waiting for 22 months. I advise my hon. Friend that for a woman, aged 72, to have to wait 22 months for a hysterectomy operation is unacceptable to her Member of Parliament. I hope that my hon. Friend will say that it is unacceptable to her, too.

I wish to give another example to the House. Mrs. G wrote to me on 22 March:

"I am 42"—

30 years younger than Mrs. B—

"and need a hysterectomy. I have been told the waiting list for this is two years. As I am in a lot of pain, amongst other symptoms, I am absolutely appalled at this terribly long waiting list. I would ask for your help, please."

I wrote to Mrs. G's consultant on 30 March in the following terms:

"I spoke to your patient and my constituent Mrs. G, on the telephone this afternoon. She tells me that you saw her earlier this month, and that she would have to wait for two years for her hysterectomy. Is that really so, please?"

The consultant replied on 8 April:

"Overall, the waiting time for the person who comes up when their name is called forward is about two years for a hysterectomy.

I repeat that that letter was dated 8 April.

We have the statistics that matter much, we have the patients who matter more and we have my hon. Friend the Minister who, mercifully, has the power to bring about an improvement in a situation that certainly I, and I suspect she, believe to be unacceptable.

The Eastbourne health authority has an outstanding chairman and general manager. On the basis of figures that I have seen, it is one of the most efficient health authorities in the country. It is not wasting money. The problem is that this year it is receiving only 85 per cent. of the amount to which, under the Government's RAWP formula, it is entitled. The revenue cash allocation for the current year is £47·4 million—£7 million short. Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Grayling and the growing numbers on our waiting lists are a direct consequence of giving to Eastbourne only 85p in every pound that the Government say that it needs.

The regional health authority is proposing that Eastbourne should receive 96 per cent. of its RAWP target in 1994—so, even then, it will not receive the amount which, according to the Government, it should receive. It needs a supplementary allocation from a supplementary waiting list fund. That would at least halt the rise in the length of time that my constituents are having to wait for operations.

My hon. Friend knows that the whole of my constituency and parts of the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) and for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) are served by the Eastbourne health authority. Each of my hon. Friends has an engagement in his constituency today. Although they cannot be here, each has authorised me to say that I speak on behalf of all four of us. Even if my hon. Friend the Minister cannot this afternoon announce any specific measures to help to resolve a problem that is becoming worse all the time, I hope that she will agree to consider very carefully the facts that have been drawn to her attention in this debate, and to which her officials will have drawn her attention since they first knew a week ago that the debate would take place.

If my hon. Friend's constituents were faced with the same problems as those that face my constituents, I know that she, too, would raise the matter with the appropriate Minister. I remind her of the advice given in St. Luke's gospel:

"Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him."

Today's debate is only the start. My hon. Friends and I will continue to raise these matters with the Minister of Health and with my hon. Friend until justice is done for the people of Eastbourne.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on securing the debate. Of course, I am aware of his interest in and concerns about health services in his constituency. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health and I met my hon. Friend and the other hon. Members whom he mentioned—my hon. Friends the Members for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardell), and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—on 10 February, and we had a most useful discussion.

Eastbourne health authority serves a population of around 180,000, but more than 25 per cent. of those people are over 65. From 1983-86, there was an increase of 10·5 per cent. in the number of people aged over 85. The overall population is also rising. Between 1981 and 1986 Eastbourne's population increased by more than 30,000. So the population is increasing and the average age is rising. We are aware of the pressures—particularly the over-85s—and have been studying them in the light of the resource allocation working party.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

One of the recommendations in the National Health Service management board's interim report on RAWP is that an over-85 age band be introduced into the national calculations by which we allocate resources. That will particularly benefit South-East Thames region, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency. In fact, in setting targets for districts in this current year, 1988-89, South-East Thames regional health authority incorporated the 85-plus age band in its allocation formula to the districts, and that helped districts such as Eastbourne. Our national review analysis research on the issue is complete. We are considering recommendations, and shall shortly make announcements.

Partly as a response to demographic pressures, the funding of Eastbourne health authority has been substantially increased. In 1982, when the health authority was created, its cash allocation was £34·5 million. In addition, £2·3 million was allocated for smaller capital schemes within the district. The initial money is the basis of funding and is not the whole story. Last year, 1987-88, the initial cash allocation had jumped to £41·8 million. On top of that, there was £3·2 million for smaller capital schemes.

Cost improvement schemes since 1984-85 have also improved, through better efficiency, with a substantial movement of nearly £2 million within the authority to improve patient care. There has also been the sale of land and surplus property since 1982-83, which has provided the district with £4·7 million on top of that. In these ways, we expect the health authority to make itself more efficient and use the cash released for improved patient care.

In 1987-88, the year just ended, adding together all the funding elements for that year, total funding stood at £46·6 million, which is clearly a substantial increase—25 per cent.—over 1982. This year's initial allocation is a further increase of 13 per cent., up to the £47·4 million that my hon. Friend mentioned. That increase is clearly much more than inflation, and it is the highest increase of all health authorities in South-East Thames region.

On the capital side, since 1982, a total of almost £40 million has been allocated to Eastbourne, the major share of which is for the new district general hospital phase II, which is costing £16·6 million. There has also been refurbishment at Hellingly—I gather that the health authority has some interesting ideas about developments there—plus a new chiropody school that cost almost £1 million, and two health centres. The Forest Row health centre is costing nearly £400,000, and the Seaford health centre, which is costing £1·44 million, was opened by my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale last year. There are considerable developments going on.

That achievement is translated into more staff. From 1982-86, front line staff increased by 75 whole-time equivalents. I note with interest that there was a substantial rise in the number of general practitioners, dentists and opticians. That should have been sufficient to keep pace with demographic change and many of the increasing demands placed on them. Most of all, it means that far more patients are being treated in Eastbourne. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of the figures. In 1982, there were 22,500 in-patients. In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 24,800—an increase of over 10 per cent. For day cases, the increase was even larger—34 per cent. Overall, there has been a small reduction in out-patient attendances, but that is largely due to a change in obstetric attendances, which, again, is a feature of the demography of the area. But, for example, there has been a rise of over 14 per cent. in the number of gynaecological out-patient attendances. Again, to look at where things are going well, there has been a 25 per cent. increase in general surgery in-patients. Clearly, some of the consultants and staff are working harder and are enabled thereby to increase their productivity.

One of the calculations that it is possible to do on this data, and which I have had done in the week since the debate was called, which shows day cases as a percentage of all in-patients and day cases, demonstrates that there is considerable variation between specialities in this district. Day case work is valuable. It tends to increase throughput faster than costs, and patients like it. In 1986 in general medicine, general surgery and opthalmology the district was among or close to the bottom 10 per cent. of districts in the entire country. Yet for trauma, orthopaedic surgery and gynaecology it was in the top 10 per cent. of districts. It may be, therefore, that some of the consultants need to share their worthwhile experiences with their colleagues.

I met the district general manager, Mr. Sully, and the chairman, Mr. Platt, of the Eastbourne district health authority early this morning. They came to my office here at the House of Commons at my request. I am deeply grateful to them for giving me so much of their time today and I am satisfied that they are aware of my concerns and those of my hon. Friend. I do not feel that all the difficulties are due to funding, for, as I have indicated, increased funding has been relatively generous whereas the level of activity around the district is distinctly variable.

My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the waiting lists and I told him that we share his anxiety. The picture is possibly not as black as painted. For example, the numbers on the longest list, trauma and orthopaedics, were starting to come down during 1987, partly because the district received £110,000 from the waiting list initiative last year and partly because it managed to do some 94 additional hip replacement operations in six months. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend is right that other lists remain stubbornly high and are tending to increase.

This year Eastbourne's main priority is to reduce its gynaecology and ENT waiting lists. I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend said about his constituents, Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Grayling. If he would be kind enough to allow me, I shall look again at the details of those cases. He will realise that the decision when to operate is not mine but their clinicians'. That £155,000 that we have made available to district health authorities is available now and we do not expect it to be held over until October or any other arbitrary date. We expect it to be used promptly.

I noticed that the health authority issued a press statement on Thursday 21 April about a committee of inquiry into services for women in the area. The committee has now reported to the health authority on problems in maternity and gynaecological services. Several recommendations have been made to the health authority which may include the appointment of an additional specialist and the realignment of clinical responsibilities between consultants.

In the light of what my hon. Friend said, I am surprised that the health authority has asked its general manager to report back in July. It seems entirely right that it should

acquire a sense of urgency about this matter and report back sooner. Perhaps it cannot report back in May, but I would expect it to deal with the issue at the June meeting and I should like to know if it does not.

My hon. Friend should not assume that because patients have no booked date they will never be seen or will be seen only by chance. I obtained the latest figures for the quarter June to September 1987 and I established that Eastbourne health authority admitted 1,696 cases from the waiting list to the hospitals who did not have booked admission dates. The median waiting time for these cases was 10 weeks. Therefore, it is not entirely a matter of gloom.

I am also told that in Eastbourne the September 1987 figures, again the latest available, show that 95 per cent. of those admitted as in-patients or day patients were admitted within 12 months, which is roughly the same as the national average. That suggests, as do some of the other figures that my hon. Friend mentioned, that a list of two years is both most unusual in this district and most unacceptable to those concerned. I think that I have made my remarks about gynaecology clear to him and the district health authority, and we expect action on that.

Some of these difficulties were made much worse last year by the temporary closure of half the operating theatres for three months during the summer. They were very much in need of upgrading and redecorating. Nevertheless, I take the view that arrangements should have been made for as many patients as possible to be treated elsewhere. It is not good enough to close theatres, keep the staff on and leave patients waiting. I gather that some 300 waiting list cases were lost during that period.

I have taken another close look at the figures for ophthalmology, which is one of the bad waiting lists. Although Eastbourne's throughput figures are generally good, they are only around average in gynaecology and among the lowest 20 per cent. in the country in ophthalmology. If in ophthalmology the district were to reduce the length of time that beds are left empty between patients from six days to even the regional average of three days, which is still too high, and if in the same specialism the throughput was increased from its low level of barely 75 per cent. of the national average, a lot more patients would be seen and perhaps a lot more patients would be able to see.

My calculation is that between 250 and 300 more ophthalmology patients would be attended to, which would virtually clear the waiting list. I am told that they are all busy doing out-patient clinics. I have suggested to the health authority that it needs to review its links between its general practitioners, clinical assistants, out-patient clinics, in-patient work and day case work in a speciality such as ophthalmology to ensure that people are not merely seen and sent away without treatment.

The district is doing other things which are helping to develop services in other important areas. To be fair to it, we should note them. An extra consultant paediatrician will shortly be appointed. Staffing levels for midwives and those who care for the elderly will be improved. Temporary out-patient clinics in, for example, rheumatology, are to be made permanent and more homes in the community for people with mental handicaps will be opened.

I have indicated my concern, which I hope my hon. Friend recognises. I am giving some thought to how districts that face rapid increases in the number of very old people in their areas during the next few years should manage their affairs to avoid a build-up of waiting lists. I have therefore asked my officials to consider whether a study would be useful, perhaps building on expertise elsewhere and possibly looking at several districts on the south coast, including Eastbourne. If we decide to proceed on those lines, I hope that my hon. Friend could give such a study his full support. I put the same point to the chairman this morning. He said that the authority would co-operate enthusiastically with such a study, which would be of wide interest.

Service provision in the district will be invigorated when the second phase of the district general hospital becomes operational next year. It will provide another 350 beds for elderly psychiatric patients and general medical patients, and there is to be a 120-place psychiatric day hospital. More money will therefore go to Eastbourne in the coming years to help run services from this major capital development.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Three o'clock till Tuesday 3 May, pursuant to Resolution of the House of 25 March.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 May 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts and a measure:

1. Duchy of Lancaster Act 1988.
2. Regional Development Grants (Termination) Act 1988.
3. Merchant Shipping Act 1988.
4. British Railways Order Confirmation Act 1988.
5. Saint Bennett Fink Burial Ground (City of London) Act 1988.
6. Church Commissioners (Assistance for Priority Areas) Measure 1988.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRIGHTON AND PRESTON CEMETERY BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of the fall in unemployment in the last 12 months in the United Kingdom.

4. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently unemployed; and what are the comparable figures for 12 months ago.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): In March 1988, seasonally adjusted adult unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,505,000, a fall of 532,500 over the past 12 months. Unemployment has now fallen consistently for 20 months, by 706,000, the largest sustained fall on record.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. Friend aware that unemployment in Basildon has practically halved since 1983? In fact, it has fallen so much that the Socialist-inspired unemployment board has fallen down. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that dramatic fall reflects great credit on the local jobcentres, the enterprise of local businesses and, above all, the success of the Government's policies?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree. Above all, it shows the strength of the economy and the fact that new jobs are now being created at an unprecedented rate.

Mr. Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that long-term unemployment has fallen, from January 1987 t January 1988, by 234,000? Will he also confirm that that shows the complete success of the job creation and training measures introduced by the Government? Will he condemn those unions that are not co-operating in full to reduce further the number of unemployed?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, indeed. There was a fall of about 234,000 over those 12 months in long-term unemployment —that is unemployment of more than 12 months. That is the biggest 12-month fall on record. There was also a record fall of about 365,000 over those 12 months in longer-term unemployment—that is unemployment of more than six months. That shows the Government's commitment to reducing unemployment and the success of their policies.

Mr. Duffy: The Secretary of State did not mention the continuing slowing down of numbers of people leaving the jobless queues. Contrary to what his hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) said, is he aware that, in its latest business trend survey, the Sheffield Engineering Employers Association reports that three times as many firms show no improvement, or even a worsening of the numbers of employees, as show an improvement?

Mr. Fowler: There are some special factors associated with Sheffield business which are not the responsibility of

Government. Unemployment is falling in all regions. One of the areas in which it has come down fastest over the past 12 months is Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State give a guarantee that, during the remainder of this Parliament, the unemployment figures will continue to fall? Will he tell the House and those outside why, when unemployment is rising the Government say that it has little or nothing to do with their policies, but when unemployment is falling during an election boom, they claim the credit?

Mr. Fowler: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the strength of the economy is one of the real reasons why unemployment is falling and new jobs are being created. There is no doubt about that. I see no reason why unemployment should not continue to fall. I shall not put a figure on that, but the most significant point for the hon. Gentleman is that unemployment has fallen, not just over one, two or three months, but for each of the past 20 months. That is the Government's record.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the most encouraging things for the west midlands, which have suffered under the necessary economic changes, is that only 370 redundancies have been announced, whereas 7,400 new jobs have been created, proving that at long last, in spite of the problems that we have suffered, the midlands are on their way again? Does he agree that, provided the pound stays stable, we have a chance of that record going on and on?

Mr. Fowler: There is no doubt that the midlands, and the west midlands in particular, are very much on their way again. The west midlands have shown the largest decrease of all the regions in the rate of unemployment over the past 12 months.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that, cutting out the Government's 20 fiddles of the unemployment figures, the true figure for unemployment in Britain today is 3,305,000? Is he not ashamed that that figure is still almost three times higher than that which the Government inherited in 1979, and higher at 11·9 per cent. than in any other major Western country, except for Spain and Italy? Finally, is he not ashamed that, even where jobs have been created, they have been overwhelmingly low-pay, low-skill, part-time jobs with no future?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman, even by his own standards, is being extremely foolish in everything that he has said. Literally every point that he has just made is untrue and does not coincide with the facts. The labour force survey shows that the unemployment position is, if anything, understated. In other words, it shows a better rather than a worse unemployment position.

The position in respect of part-time jobs is not as the hon. Gentleman says. It is about half full-time and half part-time jobs. Those are the figures for the past 12 months. During the general election the hon. Gentleman and his predecessor said that when the election was over unemployment would go up again but since the election unemployment has come down by almost 420,000.

2. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on comparable unemployment figures for France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fowler: The latest figures show that unemployment in the United Kingdom is lower than in France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. It is also lower than in Spain and Ireland. Over the past year the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom has fallen faster than in any other industrial country.

Mr. Ward: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. At the risk of upsetting the Opposition further with more good news, will he confirm that average employment in the United Kingdom is higher as a proportion than that of any of our EEC partners? Is he prepared to give the figures for those under 25 who are unemployed?

Mr. Fowler: I agree with my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) appears to have a vested interest in high unemployment, not low unemployment.

With regard to the under-25s, the latest comparison shows that the United Kingdom has 14·5 per cent. unemployed compared with a European Community average of 20·6 per cent.

Mrs. Fyfe: Is the Minister aware that the bulk of the growth in employment over recent months has been in East Anglia, the south-west, the south-east and the midlands, and that the percentage increase in Scotland is precisely 0·1 per cent.? Will he comment on the position in Glasgow, Maryhill where unemployment is currently, 29 per cent., the position has not improved recently and there is precious little private sector investment?

Mr. Fowler: Unemployment has come down in all regions. That is not to say that there are not areas where we want unemployment to come down even further and I believe that it will. It is inaccurate for the hon. Lady to say that the fall is confined to London and the south-east. The significance of the figures for the past 18 to 20 months is that unemployment has come down literally in every region.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm what the Minister with responsibility for tourism was good enough to say in Lancaster on Thursday namely, that there is a tremendous spin-off from service jobs to manufacturing jobs? Will he also confirm that places which make their service industries thrive also have thriving manufacturing industries? The continentals have known that for years, and we are only just beginning to learn it.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Service jobs in tourism, banking or computing have shown some of the biggest increases over past months. These are real jobs. As my hon. Friend has said, in many cases there is a spin-off for manufacturing industry supplying those service industries.

Youth Employment (Leicester)

3. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he proposes to take to boost youth employment prospects in Leicester.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): The employment prospects for young people in Leicester, as elsewhere, are being boosted by the high quality training and work experience offered by YTS. From September the Government are

extending their guarantee of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in work or further education. As a result, no young person under 18 need be unemployed.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware of the existence of the Leicester enterprise board, which was established by Leicester city council, whose guidelines include promoting youth employment and providing grants to local business men? Does he agree that one way to boost the prospects for youth employment in Leicester would be for the Government to provide the local authority with resources to allow it to continue its valuable and important work?

Mr. Lee: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, substantial amounts of Government money are directed to Leicester for programmes, including the inner city task force. About 80 per cent. of young people leaving YTS in Leicester enter jobs, further training or education against 75 per cent. nationally. Leicester is not doing too badly.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the city of Leicester and in Leicestershire county, including my constituency, there are many excellent youth training schemes and that they are training young people very well? There is no reason why any young person should not get training and go on to decent employment.

Mr. Lee: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. He is absolutely right. There are some excellent schemes, not only in Leicestershire, but in the whole country.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of change in unemployment levels in the last 12 months in the east midlands.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): In the year to March, seasonally adjusted adult unemployment in the east midlands fell by 33,400, or nearly 18 per cent.

Mr. Knowles: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Will he confirm that in Nottingham, East, which covers a large part of the inner city of Nottingham, unemployment has fallen by 13 per cent. in the past year? Can he quantify the rise in unfilled job vacancies that have been registered?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely correct in what he says about his constituency. Unemployment in the Nottingham travel-to-work area has fallen by more than 7,000—16 per cent.—in the year to March 1988. Vacancies notified to jobcentres in the east midlands region are up by 21·7 per cent. for the year ended March 1987, and they are up by 20·3 per cent. in the Nottingham travel-to-work area over the same period.

Mr. Ashton: That is certainly not the case in the rest of Nottinghamshire. Is the Minister aware that in my coal mining area of Bassetlaw unemployment has not fallen at all but remains at 14 or 15 per cent.? When will the Government have a proper regional policy in coal mining areas, where there has been a devastating increase in unemployment over the past few years and where very few new jobs are being created?

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to talk about the coal mining industry as such, he will know that the Government have pumped substantial sums of money into mining generally. As to the redundancies that have occurred, the Government have put a considerable amount of money into British Coal Enterprise Ltd. to try to help people through those redundancies. The hon. Gentleman cannot avoid the fact that if he considers the region and unemployment there as a whole he will find that the figures are as I have stated them to be, and they should give even his unemployed constituents considerable hope.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: It is true that the east midlands region is one of great opportunity, but I am sure my hon. Friend is aware that there remain some sad pockets of severe unemployment. I draw to his attention the 19,500 people who remain unemployed in the city of Nottingham, which is, after all, at the centre of a very prosperous region. Will my hon. Friend, when considering travel-to-work statistics, ensure that they do not disguise still-stubborn pockets of unemployment?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is correct. It is obvious that within a general pattern of figures specific areas will take longer to emerge from the recession with which the Government have had to cope.

If my hon. Friend is concerned about current Government aid, I can tell him that since 1979 £98·7 million has been ploughed into the east midlands, of which Corby has had £71·9 million. Although we realise—in the way that the Opposition do not—that the answer to all the world's woes is not to pour in Government money, in so far as that plays a proper part in the dimension of the problem, the Government have been playing their part.

Jobcentres

6. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to extend the range of practical facilities available in jobcentres for use by the unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The setting up of the employment service brought jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices under a common management. We are now undertaking a series of pilot studies across the country to test various approaches and integrating the range of services offered locally by the employment service. Our aim is to provide better and more coherent help to unemployed people.

Mr. Kennedy: I thank the Minister for that reply. I make the plea to him that when those reviews are undertaken he should bear in mind the specific problem of additional overheads which unemployed people face when pursuing available employment in areas such as the Highlands of Scotland. I quote, for example, employment in the offshore oil industry, which is often advertised in Aberdeen. This creates special problems for the unemployed person telephoning or trying to visit Aberdeen for a job interview. Will the Minister bear such factors in mind when making his review?

Mr. Lee: We shall certainly take into account all the problems that the hon. Gentleman raises, as well as specific problems that arise in rural areas, including the Highlands. In 1982-83 we offered a free telephone service to job seekers. Frankly, it was not a popular scheme and was subject to some abuse, so the service was withdrawn. Jobcentre staff are there to make telephone calls to prospective employers on behalf of those who are unemployed.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that in areas such as Mid-Kent, where unemployment is falling very steeply, there may be a temptation, perfectly properly, to cut jobcentre staff, but that many of the people who now need help in finding employment through jobcentres are harder to place and require more counselling and assistance? Will he take those considerations into account when reviewing overall staffing facilities?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are trying to improve and upgrade our service wherever possible. We have about 40,000 permanent staff employed at jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices across the country.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that the latest change in the availability for work rules introduced last week will reduce the unemployment figures by, it is estimated, about 50,000 in a full year? Is that not typical of the changes by which the dole figures have been artificially reduced by the Government? If one takes into account all the changes brought about by restart and the availability for work rules, is not at least half the drop in unemployment claimed by the Government explained by such artificial devices?

Mr. Lee: I think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has dealt with the ridiculous points that the hon. Gentleman is making, and there is no need for me to add in reply to them.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on having identified at least 500 people who, it was announced at the weekend, had been defrauding the social security system by claiming benefit while in employment? Will he accept my wish that he will continue to prosecute that wing of the population? Does he agree that it would be right to bring all those people to justice by taking them to court, just as a small business man who is not registered by the Data Protection Act 1984 will be prosecuted simply for not filling up a form?

Mr. Lee: Conservative Members are, of course, anxious to ensure that those who are genuinely entitled to employment benefit, and welfare benefits generally, receive them. We are, however, determined to stamp out fraud and abuse, and there have been a number of very successful campaigns recently, including the one mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Training Initiatives

7. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training initiatives his Department currently supports specifically for rural areas.

Mr. Nicholls: Our training programmes are available nationally to all those who are eligible, irrespective of where they live. The planning and delivery arrangements ensure that all programmes respond to particular local needs.

Mr. Davies: Has the Minister considered the particular problems that will be faced by those who are eligible for the new employment training scheme in rural areas, particularly as a result of the high cost of transport? If the scheme is not to become a conscript scene in the countryside, does the Minister accept that it must be made more attractive? One way of doing that would be to abolish the £5 travelling cost threshold and at least make all travelling costs free for the applicant.

Mr. Nicholls: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. Under the new training programme, travelling costs in excess of £5 will be met. I hope the hon. Gentleman agrees that that is a proper way to proceed. In view of the economic climate generally, and, indeed, the various training programmes that are available, I am sure that he would wish to point out that such programmes have already been particularly successful in his constituency. In the year to March 1988 unemployment fell by 19 per cent., and in the year to January 1988 the number of people under 25 out of work for more than six months fell by 34 per cent. I know how much the hon. Gentleman will welcome that, and I join him in doing so.

Sir John Farr: With the complete change in agriculture and its outlook for the future, will my hon. Friend look into the prospect of modernising the youth training scheme in so far as it affects agriculture and the changing face of the business?

Mr. Nicholls: I am certainly very much aware that YTS has played a major part in the agriculture industry, as it has elsewhere. However, it is fair to point out that nothing is ever set in tablets of stone. If schemes and training can be improved, those are obviously matters that we tend to consider. I can give my hon. Friend an assurance that improving the quality of training is constantly borne in mind.

Mr. Sheerman: I realise that the Minister is an expert on rural unemployment, but is he not concerned about trends that are occuring in youth training in rural and other areas? I had evidence only today of a scheme run by a manufacturer in Wiltshire, which is offering £92 a week to young people with no training to come into the industry. Is the Minister aware that that will mean the collapse of youth training in this country, with young people at the age of 16 again going into occupations with no future, training or prospects? What does he propose to do about that collapse?

Mr. Nicholls: I am pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman's tacit, if not explicit, support for training programmes in general, and the adult training programme in particular. It should be pointed out that not so many years ago, as a result of the policies of the Labour Government, there would not have been even unskilled jobs for people to go into, because unemployment was rising. At present, it is falling. Even if the hon. Gentleman is a late convert to the Government's policies, the sinner who has repented is welcome.

Mr. Harris: Will my hon. Friend confirm that in the county of Cornwall unemployment in rural development areas has fallen by 2·9 per cent in 12 months, which is the third largest drop in any English county? Following his visit to Cornwall on Friday, does my hon. Friend agree that the two biggest drawbacks that we face in dealing with unemployment—because the economy is now picking up—are first, a shortage of industrial land, and, secondly, the demand for more skill training?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. It needs to be stressed repeatedly that the new adult training programme has a vital role to play and that it deserves

support from both sides of the House. As we both come from country constituencies, we have the advantage of knowing what we are talking about.

Fair Employment Monitoring

8. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to introduce fair employment monitoring in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No, Sir.

Rev. Martin Smyth: If there is a need for such a system in Northern Ireland, why does the Minister consider that it is not needed here, in view of the report by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Select Committee on Employment's paper "Discrimination in Employment"? Or does the Minister accept that employment should be provided only on grounds of merit?

Mr. Nicholls: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and I fully appreciate his anxiety and sincerity, but the situation in Northern Ireland is unique. Northern Ireland is a unique part of the United Kingdom, and, unfortunately, from the hon. Gentleman's point of view, unique remedies have to be applied to it. Therefore, while the system is appropriate in Northern Ireland, we see no reason to extend it to the mainland.

Mr. Marlow: Was the absurd nonsense that is currently proposed for Northern Ireland in our election manifesto? Some of my hon. Friends would not wish to vote against something that had been in our election manifesto.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend knows that if he wishes to take up specific points of policy relating to Northern Ireland he should take them up with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I do not think that I shall give in to the temptation of being led down the road of considering election manifestos and what conclusions one should draw from them, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for teasing me.

Mr. Nellist: Given the monitoring of employment that is carried out by the Minister's Department, to which the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) referred a few minutes ago, and the allegations in today's editions of *The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Telegraph* and the sewer press by the Secretary of State about the claiming of unemployment benefit by my constituents in Coventry and the west midlands, what about the other side of the coin? How many officers at the jobcentres are employed by his Department to ensure that every unemployed person gets his full entitlement to benefit? What is his Department's advertising budget to ensure a full and fair take-up of employment benefit? *[Interruption.]* If allegations are to be made in the Chamber about unemployed workers moonlighting, which activity is not surprising given the poverty level of benefits, I can only says that when every Tory Member of Parliament has only one job—*[Interruption.]*—it will be a little less hypocritical of them to lecture working-class people about moonlighting.

Mr. Nicholls: It clearly falls to me to welcome the hon. Gentleman back to our deliberations. From the welcome that he received from this side of the House, he will have gathered that he is a long-standing favourite with me and my right hon. and hon. Friends. The pity is that being a long-standing favourite does not mean that he talks any sense. It is perfectly obvious that his recent holiday from our deliberations has not helped him.

We owe it to those who pay tax and make the contributions that fuel the social security budget to ensure that that money is properly directed. If the hon. Gentleman comes to the House to give credit and credence to those who are prepared to defraud the system, he bears a heavy responsibility.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of job vacancies registered at jobcentres.

Mr. Fowler: In March the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted and excluding community programme vacancies, was 245,500, an increase of 15 per cent. compared with a year ago.

Mr. Sackville: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the staff of the Bolton, Westhorton and Horwich jobcentres on their efforts during the past 12 months, during which unemployment in my constituency has fallen by 735? Does he agree that the very welcome rise in the number of vacancies registered at those jobcentres does not reflect the full picture? Will he give any information that he has about the number of vacancies in the economy as a whole?

Mr. Fowler: I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the Bolton office, with which my Parliamentary Private Secretary keeps me in touch. We estimate that there are about 700,000 vacancies in the economy. In other words, the vacancies at jobcentres represent only about one third of the total number of vacancies.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman consider how he might help the many thousands of steel workers who lost their jobs as long ago as 1980 under the closure programme, many of whom left school early and have no skills? One of my constituents has been out of work for many years and has found it necessary to travel to London to find work, and go home about every 10 days. This is a serious matter. He is an industrial gypsy. Will the right hon. Gentleman not be complacent, and say how such men will find work?

Mr. Fowler: I am prepared to look at the case that the hon. Gentleman has put to me. I hope that he in turn will back all the Government's moves to improve adult training. Only if we are able to provide the long-term unemployed with skills through training will they be able to take up the vacancies that are increasingly occurring.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

10. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many tourists visited British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield in 1987.

Mr. Lee: The British Nuclear Fuels site at Sellafield attracted over 104,000 visitors in 1987.

Mr. Page: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that such a large figure is a tribute to British Nuclear Fuels plc in promoting its tourism, and are there

any plans to expand that for 1988? As a general knowledge of industry is obviously beneficial, has my hon. Friend any plans to bring the experience of British Nuclear Fuels plc to other industries and companies?

Mr. Lee: British Nuclear Fuels plc is opening a new £5 million visitors centre on 6 June, at which His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh will officiate. On my hon. Friend's general point, he will, I hope, know that the encouragement of modern industrial tourism is a personal crusade of mine. We are to hold a major conference at Centre Point in September, to be hosted by the CBI, in which the English Tourist Board will participate, to try to encourage more firms to open themselves up to visitors.

Employer-School Compacts

11. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many proposals he has received to date for employer-school compacts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Fowler: There has been a good response to my announcement that the Government will back compacts between schools and employers in urban programme areas. I understand that about 40 partnerships are working on the preparation of a compact. The Manpower Services Commission is today launching a formal invitation to all 57 urban programme areas to apply for development funding. We hope initially to launch some 15 compacts throughout Britain and the Government are making available over £3 million a year for this initiative.

Mr. Evans: I welcome my right hon. Friend's initiative to guarantee YTS training and jobs for young people, particularly in inner cities, and I am pleased that he is making resources available for this programme.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. Under the compact arrangements employers will be asked to guarantee a job, with training, to young people from inner-city schools, and I hope that on this we can take the Opposition with us.

Adult Training Programme

12. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received on his plans for the new adult training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Fowler: I have received a large number of representations about the employment training programme. The programme will go ahead in September on the basis of the unanimous recommendations of the Manpower Services Commission. It will have a budget of nearly £1·5 billion and be able to provide training for up to 600,000 unemployed people each year.

Mr. Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring the decision by many unions not to co-operate with the training schemes and, in some cases, to obstruct them? Does he agree with a Transport and General Workers Union branch secretary who has written to say:

"We cannot just say we are going to wash our hands"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No quotations, please. It should be paraphrased.

Mr. Fowler: This programme was proposed unanimously by the Manpower Services Commission, on which are three trade union commissioners, including Ron Todd. I hope that in the light of that the trade unions will back this programme, because they have been part of the authorship of it.

Mr. Leyton: Will the Secretary of State consider carefully two of the recommendations that he will have had? Under existing programmes employers can chop up the low training allowance, whereas under the new programme anything over £5 is clawed back by the DHSS. Surely that is perverse and unhelpful, and could he alter it? Secondly, the child care allowance is in itself welcome, but the right hon. Gentleman will know that it is available only for those who can claim unemployment pay for six months, and that means that they have to be available for work. There is a Catch 22 situation. Could he not make the allowance available to all parents who wish to go on the scheme?

Mr. Fowler: I shall look at any of the details of the programme and seek to be as helpful as we conceivably can. I hope that in return the hon. Gentleman, with his long experience of employment matters, will back the major programme that we are putting forward, which will provide training for 600,000 unemployed persons. It would be a great tragedy if he and the trade unions turned their backs on that prospect.

Mr. Holt: Given the success of the training schemes, what proposals do the Government have, particularly in the light of the success of the television advertising of job vacancies in the north of England, at my request—that is the good thing—for assisting with the re-location of people who, having undergone training and acquired new skills, can find no jobs in the locality and wish to go to other parts of the country?

Mr. Fowler: We shall consider that, but the major issue here is that there are many vacancies in the regions, as shown by the vacancies statistics. Someone does not have to travel from north to south to find a job. The vacancies are often there in the region, provided that people have the skills to fill them. The whole point of the employment training programme is to provide skills for unemployed people.

Ms. Short: Has the Secretary of State received representations on the new adult training scheme—or ET, as we are now told to call it—from Windsor, Kensington and Chelsea, Maidenhead and Fylde, which are all Tory local authorities which have decided to boycott the scheme because, they say, it is so under-funded?

Mr. Fowler: I have noted those councils, and if that is the case I hope that they will reconsider their position. What is needed is that people, and particularly the hon. Lady, should stop seeking to sabotage a training programme whose major purpose is to bring unemployed people back into employment.

Mr. Favell: Has my right hon. Friend read recent press speculation that the TUC might seek to destroy the new

training scheme? Can it really be that the TUC would show such callous disregard for 600,000 long-term unemployed people?

Mr. Fowler: I agree with my hon. Friend. It cannot be stated too often that the proposals which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) is seeking to sabotage are the product of the Manpower Services Commission, on which there are three trade union commissioners, led by Ron Todd. That being so, I very much hope that not only the TUC, but the Labour party, too, will reconsider their destructive attitude.

Ethnic Monitoring

13. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the implementation in the private sector of the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality concerning ethnic monitoring.

Mr. Nicholls: Progress is being made. The indications from recent visits to major private sector employers by the Department's race relations employment advisory service are that one third have introduced, or are considering introducing, ethnic monitoring.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept the unanimous view of the Employment Committee that discrimination against people because they are black is rampant and rife throughout private industry? Does he not know that people are not treated equally—that is all that anyone asks—and that the ethnic monitoring rules in the code are not being complied with? Why is he not prepared to take action when he has just admitted that the vast majority of private industries have not complied with the code?

Mr. Nicholls: I do not accept that analysis, and I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman accepts it. The Government's commitment against racial discrimination is total, and the hon. and learned Gentleman knows that.

Let me give the hon. and learned Gentleman some of the good news, because he seems to wish to concentrate on the bad news. If he considers his own city of Leicester, he will know that, on the advice of the Department's advisory service, five of the 11 major public and private employers in Leicester have introduced ethnic monitoring. A great deal of good work is being done. It is a pity that the hon. and learned Gentleman does not concentrate on that, instead of trying to pretend that things are as bad as he suggests.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Greenway: I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on embarking today upon her 10th year as Prime Minister, and wish her many more.

Given general doubts about the credibility of the Thames Television "This Week" programme on the Gibraltar shooting, does my right hon. Friend agree that there must be grave doubts about the ability of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to control the programme, in which troops were tried and convicted on the basis of very dubious evidence?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his congratulations. I share his concern about the decision of the IBA to show a film before an inquest has been held. The report of the interdepartmental committee on the law of contempt as it affects tribunals of inquiry, which was chaired by Lord Salmon, stated:

> "One would not wish to see in this country the horror of trial by Press, Television and Radio . . . We have so far escaped them only because of a high sense of responsibility on the part of the Press, Television and Radio and also because of the law of contempt."

I agree with my hon. Friend that on this occasion neither Thames Television nor the IBA demonstrated that high sense of responsibility to which the judge referred.

Mr. Macleman: If the Prime Minister takes time today to reflect on the forthcoming local elections, will she recognise that many people will regard them as an opportunity to register their strong opposition to her attempt to transfer all power over local services from local authorities to the Government? Will she state her willingness to arrest that anti-democratic process?

The Prime Minister: What the hon. Gentleman has said is just not so. Indeed, when I last answered a question on the subject I pointed out that we would not take control of education because I did not think it right that we should do so. Our purpose is to try to give as many people as possible—parents and governors—much more control over their children's education. I believe that that would be greatly to the benefit of children.

We wish to reform local government finance under the community charge, which in England will meet only one quarter of local government expenditure, and in Scotland will meet only one seventh of local government expenditure. The reform is designed to ensure that everyone in each country can judge the level of community charge, because the same level of services, delivered at the same level of efficiency, should result in the same level of community charge. That will give much more accountability.

Mr. Devlin: Does my right hon. Friend recall meeting, during her tour of Teesside, Mr. Eric Fletcher, the 35-year-old Middlesbrough man who threw 1,000 job applications at her, saying that he had not found a job? Was my right hon. Friend not surprised to read recently that Mr. Fletcher had found a full-time job? Will she give the same advice to others in a similar position?

The Prime Minister: I saw the news that Mr. Fletcher has a full-time job. I understand that he took my advice and undertook some excellent training, which enabled him to obtain a job. I congratulate him. I thank him for thanking me, which is a rare experience.

Mr. Hattersley A moment ago the Prime Minister spoke of the importance of judging the results of the poll tax. Will she tell us why the Government refuse to publish

the figures that show the effect of the poll tax on individuals in England, when they have published the figures for Scotland and Wales?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the actual figures for the poll tax will depend—*[Interruption.]* for the community charge. I call it the community charge.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The actual figures for the amount that will be paid to local authorities for their services will depend largely on their expenditure nearer the time.

Mr. Hattersley: If the right hon. Lady was able to overcome those difficulties, as well as her verbal confusion, for Scotland and Wales, why can she not do the same for England? Is it not a fact that if the truth about the poll tax were to be published by the Government before Thursday's election the Tory party would have to write off the English boroughs, in the same way as they have written off Wales and Scotland?

The Prime Minister: No. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we are nearer the introduction of the community charge in Scotland than we are in England. If the community charge is very high, it is likely to be because of high or extravagant expenditure by Left-wing local authorities.

Mr. Hattersley: As the right hon. Lady persists in denying other people's figures, without daring to provide figures of her own, will she attempt a straight answer to a simple question? Is she saying "yes" or "no" to whether millions of men and women, including those in Tory boroughs, will pay more under the poll tax than they do under the rates? Will not millions of those men and women be among the low-income groups which have already been so grievously penalised by the Government?

The Prime Minister: Those who have hitherto paid nothing because they have paid no rates, will, of course, pay something towards the community charge—and so they should. The change is based upon equity, not upon gainers or losers. The real reason why the Opposition are fighting the community charge is that Left-wing authorities and councils will no longer be able to conceal the real cost of their policies.

Mr. Whitney: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to consider further changes in the housing benefit arrangements to take account of the fact that, following the probable sequestration of the assets of the National Union of Seamen, the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not touch on sub judice matters.

Mr. Whitney: Will my right hon. Friend take account of the fact that the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, East and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) face the prospect of losing the advantage of their rental accommodation, at a reported weekly rent of £18?

The Prime Minister: I think that total expenditure is now about £5·3 billion for housing benefit, and the adjustments that have been made mean that we have it just about right.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Prime Minister aware that, rather than the funds of the National Union of Seamen being sequestrated because it is acting on principle against a cut in wages and an increase in hours of work, it is P and O that should have its funds sequestrated because of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster at Zeebrugge? The sequestrated money could then be paid to the victims and the relatives of that awful disaster.

The Prime Minister: Sequestration is a matter for the courts, not for me, as the hon. Gentleman is well aware. I remind him that everyone has a right to go to his place of work without let or hindrance, and we shall uphold that right. With regard to the state of the dispute, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the parties went to ACAS, which pronounced a settlement, which P and O was prepared to accept, but which the National Union of Seamen was not.

Mr. Sayeed: Spending on health, education and social security now accounts for over 70 per cent. of Government expenditure, which is the highest ever figure in proportionate or real terms. Does my right hon. Friend agree that to be able to spend such massive sums, without bankrupting the country, is a vindication of the Government's economic policy? Does she regret the fact that the Opposition seem to be more interested in exploiting disadvantaged people for party-political gain——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister can answer only for her responsibilities.

Mr. Sayeed *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked his question.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The massive amounts now being spent on social security, housing benefit, the Health Service and education are a tribute to enterprise and flourishing industry and commerce, which provide the means for such a high level of services.

Q2. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: The Prime Minister said today, as she did last Thursday, that she expects the same level and standard of service, resulting in the same community charge, throughout the United Kingdom. Does the Prime Minister not understand that the massive differences in the levels of unemployment in Britain demand different responses from the local authorities? Does she not understand that, or has no one yet told her?

The Prime Minister: I have made it quite clear that in each country the same level of community charge would apply. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the grant to Scotland will be much greater proportionately than the grant to England. The community charge will meet only one seventh of local authority expenditure in Scotland, whereas it will meet one quarter in England. The community charge will be the same in different places in England, and in different places in Scotland, if there are

the same levels of services and efficiency. The differences to which the hon. Gentleman referred will be taken into account in calculating the grant.

Q3. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Nicholson: My right hon. Friend may not have seen the ridiculous article by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in *The Times* today, in which he rubbishes the efforts of honest people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Lady goes too far down that road, I remind her that questions must be directed to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Miss Nicholson: It is to do with the attempts of millions of ordinary people in the United Kingdom to give to those in the United Kingdom and overseas. It is an Opposition figleaf to cover their own inadequacies——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has been here long enough to know that she must ask a question on a matter for which the Prime Minister has responsibility.

Miss Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that charitable giving is a proper complement to the enormous amount of state aid that is provided for the under-privileged?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Although we have the highest standard of social services that there has ever been in our history, that should be augmented by charitable giving, particularly bearing in mind the enormous number of voluntary associations that we have. My hon. Friend knows a great deal about this, because for many years she was in charge of raising money for the Save the Children Fund. She, that fund, and many other funds have done wonderful things for those in need.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Prime Minister think it fair competition that British confectionery and chocolate companies cannot buy into Swiss companies, but that the British Fruit Gum and the British Kit Kat are threatened by foreign predators? Will she refer the Nestlé bid for Rowntree plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

The Prime Minister: I understand perfectly well what the hon. Gentleman is referring to. My right hon. Friend will, of course, await the report of the Office of Fair Trading and then make up his mind whether to refer the matter to the MMC.

Q4. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: In welcoming the visit to Britain tomorrow by the Prime Minister of Japan, may I ask my right hon. Friend to make it clear to him that we require action rather than words in terms of free trade between our two countries? In particular, will she make it clear that that applies to further places on the Tokyo stock exchange for British companies, and to the ending of the disgraceful discrimination against Scotch whisky?

The Prime Minister: The visit by the new Prime Minister of Japan is important. We are very pleased, as I am sure my hon. Friend is, with the increasing amount that Japan is investing in this country. There are, as he suggests, one or two matters over which we still have strong disagreement, although our exports to Japan have gone up by some 50 per cent. over the past two years. I shall, of course, discuss those two matters—seats on the Tokyo stock exchange and a fair regime for the taxation of spirits —with the Japanese Prime Minister, and I hope that they will soon be resolved.

Terrorist Incidents (The Netherlands)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about two incidents involving the savage murders on 1 May of three Royal Air Force personnel serving in RAF Germany.

Shortly after 1 am local time on Sunday 1 May, an attack was made with an automatic weapon on three Royal Air Force personnel sitting in a private car near the King George public house at Roermond, in the Netherlands, close to the border with the Federal Republic of Germany. Senior Aircraftsman Ian Shinner, a gunner with 16 Squadron of the Royal Air Force Regiment based at RAF Wildenrath, was killed, and his companions, SAC Lewis and SAC Garth, were injured.

Very shortly afterwards a powerful bomb destroyed a car in the car park of the Baccus discotheque in Nieuw-bergen, killing SAC John Baxter and SAC John Reid, both serving at RAF Laarbruch, and seriously injuring SAC Andrew Kelly, their companion.

The Provisional Irish Republican Army has admitted responsibility for these atrocities.

The whole House will join me in sending condolences to the relatives of the dead and injured, and condemning this further manifestation of the callous barbarism, to which the IRA and its supporters and sympathisers are prepared to stoop. The victims were off duty, non-operational, in civilian clothes and were in the Netherlands for purely recreational purposes. They posed no threat to anyone and their murder is nothing short of a crime against decency and humanity.

Immediate steps have been set in hand by the Netherlands police to identify and trace the culprits. The British authorities are in close touch with the Netherlands and German authorities and members of the Metropolitan police are assisting the Netherlands police at the latter's request.

Our security procedures are kept under constant review and extensive measures are already in hand to guard against terrorist attacks of this kind. All service personnel, wherever they are serving, are reminded continuously of the need for vigilance and of the wisdom of taking appropriate precautions in the light of the threat. We have already taken steps to strengthen still further the security of British forces in Germany and the Netherlands in the immediate aftermath of these attacks and we are considering what further security measures might be appropriate in the longer term, both there and elsewhere. Other British overseas representatives are also maintaining a high state of vigilance at the present time.

The fact remains that, even given the murders and injuries to which our service men have been subjected this last weekend, normal life for our service men, and indeed for all other British representatives overseas, must continue as far as practicable. They, like us, must be able to enjoy the benefits of the way of life that they are dedicated to maintain on behalf of the nation as a whole.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): May I express for myself and on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends our total condemnation of the murder and maiming of six Royal Air Force service men in the Netherlands in the early hours of last Sunday. May I also express our sympathy to their families and friends, and our hope and trust that those who, fortunately, survived will fully recover. Murder cannot be justified or condoned wherever it takes place, and there can be no shred of justification for the criminal attacks on those young men, who were doing no harm to anyone.

The right hon. Gentleman has stated that security is being constantly reviewed and that he is looking at security in the longer term. First, will he ensure that consideration will be given to security surrounding the married quarters of our service men and their families in the Federal Republic of Germany? Secondly, we ask that the consideration includes the security of military establishments here in Britain.

Thirdly, it has been suggested that the distinctive number plates on the cars of British service men abroad make them easier to identify. Would it not be possible to replace those distinctive plates with personal identity cards which would be carried by the driver and which could contain all the necessary legal and fiscal information, thereby enabling the plates to be neutral? Fourthly, when security is being considered, could the right hon. Gentleman and those in other Departments consider the effect of proposals for 1992 whereby freedom of movement of people and goods throughout EEC countries will be allowed? Will not those proposals make it more difficult to detect, to control and to deter terrorists?

Ultimately, the best tribute that can be paid to the six young men and their families is to apprehend those who have committed these crimes, to bring them to justice and to punish them in accordance with the due processes of the law.

Mr. Younger: I am sure that not only me but the whole House and those concerned will be very grateful to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) for his very sincere expression of sympathy and his support for the armed forces in the difficult work that they undertake.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we shall be taking into account the question of security in married quarters in the Federal Republic of Germany as well as elsewhere, and of course in all military establishments, whether they are in Western Germany or the United Kingdom.

I do not wish to be drawn into detailed considerations now, but the possibility of issuing German number plates to British forces personnel serving in Germany has been reviewed on several occasions. The solution is not, however, quite as simple as it seems. Indeed, German number plates would not necessarily make British service men's cars as inconspicuous as people might think. I agree, however, that anything that can sensibly and legally be done, or any advice that can be given to avoid drawing attention to British service men's private cars, needs most careful consideration.

With regard to 1992, it is worth pointing out that, in accepting the provisions of the Single European Act, the United Kingdom and other member States have expressly reserved their right to take such measures as they think necessary to combat terrorism. The provisions of the Single European Act will not, of themselves, require the abolition of immigration controls at the Community's internal frontiers by the end of 1992; nor do they provide any fresh rights of free movement to European

Community nationals. The Government are determined to take any measures that are necessary to ensure security within the United Kingdom.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that our greatest priority is to find the culprits and apprehend them. I can assure him that all possible will be done to achieve that.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is gratifying to find that the whole House can unite to condemn what has happened? Will he ensure that there is a NATO initiative to help us to ensure that the IRA does not have any safe haven and that an international campaign is mounted against the terrorists?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I agree that there is absolute unity among all the parties and other people about the matter. I also entirely agree that, at the end of the day, international co-operation is the only way to make an impact on terrorism.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): As a foundation member of the Royal Air Force Regiment, may I echo the sympathy already expressed to the injured and bereaved? Is it not a sobering thought that, if those young men had been armed, and if they had shot any of their assassins, they would by now have been branded as murderers in advance of any court hearing or inquiry? In the circumstances, is it any wonder that the security forces sometimes wonder whether they will ever be able to win the battle against terrorism?

Mr. Younger: I greatly appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's sympathy, especially given his background in the RAF Regiment. As to his other remarks, I do not believe that those considerations will be lost on many people in the country.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Does my right hon. Friend recall that it is some time since the Provisional IRA, in common with other terrorist organisations on the continent with which it has relations, decided that it would attack NATO installations and personnel—and indeed has done so? May we be assured that there will be the fullest co-operation with other NATO powers and forces so that there can be a common campaign to defeat terrorism on the continent?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I assure him that we shall do all that we can to involve our NATO allies in co-operation to defeat terrorism. We are enjoying excellent co-operation from our friends in the Netherlands, which we greatly appreciate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not clear that the IRA is now planning a long-term and determined campaign of violence throughout Europe? Since that is its intention, may we have an assurance that the Prime Minister does not feel locked in by undertakings that she has previously given to the House on the question of proposals for the future of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Younger: I do not believe that that question has a direct relevance to this matter—a deliberate and organised terrorist campaign against innocent people. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, myself and I believe all Members of the House will join in repudiating that campaign absolutely.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the right hon. Gentleman condemn those politicians in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic as well as in this country who equate the killing of those young, innocent service men, who were off duty, with the killing of the three IRA terrorists in Gibraltar, who were intent on the murder and slaughter of hundreds of people there?

Mr. Younger: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman. I see no link with anything else. The murder of an innocent person by a terrorist is an event on its own, which should be condemned absolutely on its own.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Secretary of State accept on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends our detestation of those foul crimes and our sympathy for the bereaved? We understand the feeling of the parents of one young Scot, who have said that his murder was an utterly futile act. Will he also accept that, at this time, it is right to repudiate the talk that has come from some sources in Northern Ireland about the containment of violence at an acceptable level? Does he recognise that there is no acceptable level of organised violence and that we are engaged in an international attack upon a vile force? Does the right hon. Gentleman propose to treat the matter in that way when he next meets the Trevi group?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful, and I am sure the relatives will be, for the hon. Gentleman's expression of sympathy, which is greatly appreciated. I am sure that the whole House will agree that there is no acceptable level of violence anywhere—we are all united upon that.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): Does my right hon. Friend accept that great sympathy is felt in all parts of the House for the bereaved relatives of those who died in this cowardly attack, one of whom was my constituent? Will he reassure the House that all possible resources will be mobilised and sustained by all European Governments —including that of the Republic of Ireland—to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice?

Mr. Younger: I particularly appreciate my hon. Friend's sentiments, as one of his constituents was involved. I certainly agree that all Governments throughout Europe, and further afield, will, I have no doubt, join in condemning this violence.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that the town of Lenzie, which he knows well, was stunned and greatly saddened by the news of the death of SAC Millar Reid and of the deaths of and injuries to others? Does he accept that, even in her hour of distress, Mrs. Reid spoke for many when she talked of the "pointless and futile" nature of these events? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that those who perpetrate this sort of activity are gravely mistaken if they think that violence and terrorism do any good to any cause?

Mr. Younger: I very much appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says, particularly because the person affected in this tragic event came from Lenzie which I, too, know. I entirely agree about the futility of this. It is worth recording that there can be no political belief for which it is worth killing a wholly innocent life. That is something that we all believe.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): In view of the need to bring the perpetrators of this crime to proper trial, will my right hon. Friend make the strongest possible representations to the television authorities that they should not put out any programme whitewashing the IRA in anticipation of any due legal process?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will have noted it, as television matters are very much in their responsibility.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): As the IRA is clearly dedicated to continue this callous targeting of off-duty service men and their families, is the Secretary of State satisfied about the present level of European co-operation in intelligence gathering of information about the movements of suspected terrorists, and about the necessary monitoring of what they get up to?

Mr. Younger: I could never be satisfied with intelligence gathering until it was virtually perfectly able to tell us what is likely to happen. I can say only that any shortcomings in intelligence are not due to lack of co-operation from our friends in other Governments, all of whom have expressed considerable sympathy for us.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I join my right hon. Friend in expressing sympathy to the families of the murdered young service men. I note that this is a matter which has been considered on earlier occasions, but will my right hon. Friend take up with the Federal German Government as a matter of the greatest urgency the issue of licence plates for British service personnel in West Germany? It is unacceptable that they should be identifiable by the licence plates that their vehicles bear, and it is urgent that the system should be changed.

Mr. Younger: I accept that this matter should be examined urgently, and I confirm that it will be.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast South): I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) in sympathising with the relatives of the bereaved and injured. I also welcome the Minister's assurance that it is not the Government's policy to have an acceptable level of violence—a concept first propounded by a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that those —the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) referred to them—who have compared the shooting in Gibraltar with this incident either suffer from amnesia when they suggest that this was in retaliation for Gibraltar, given that these events have been going on for a long time, or, far worse, are acting as spokespersons defending the activities of the IRA?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but those people who mention retaliation should bear in mind that this is one of a long series of atrocities in various places and it should be seen in its perspective.

The hon. Gentleman has expressed his sympathy and he might like to know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is today going to see those affected and their families and will consult the security authorities about improvements in security.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this latest incident, which, as he says, is just one in a long series, highlights the fact that, in the minds of millions of people in this country, the death penalty should be available to the courts as punishment for such incidents? Will he also have strong words with the Home Secretary to see whether we can have a debate on the subject?

Mr. Younger: As my hon. Friend knows, the question of capital punishment for terrorists is very much a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who will have noted what has been said. However, what my hon. Friend said earlier is very important. There can be no division between people in the battle against terrorists. Whatever cause terrorists purport to represent, terrorism is an enemy of all civilised societies and there can be no division in the fight against it.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of my hon. Friends in the Scottish and Welsh National parties, may I say that we also extend our deepest sympathy to the families of those involved. To those representing constitutional nationalists, it is clear that, far from advancing the cause of constitutional change, terrorists and those who perpetrate acts of violence set it back.

Mr. Younger: I agree completely with the hon. Lady and greatly appreciate her remarks. It seems particularly obtuse if, when terrorism does not advance the causes that it purports to support, people are killed in such a pointless and futile process.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the Royal Air Force parliamentary group would wish to be associated with his expressions of sympathy and condolence to the dependants of the service men who have died? Will he also bear in mind the fact that all experience in dealing with terrorists shows clearly that they go for soft targets in the hope that that will persuade democracies to change their attitudes and views and that, when democracies adopt such an attitude, they end up with a worse situation? Does he agree that there is only one way to deal with terrorism, and that is the way constantly stated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I appreciate those remarks on behalf of the Royal Air Force parliamentary group. As I have said, there is no division in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Speaking as a contemporary of the Secretary of State—I did my national service in the British Army of the Rhine, rather than, like the Secretary of State, in Korea—it is a formidable task that the forces face in maintaining personnel security in West Germany. The Secretary of State says that there is no link between what happened there and what happened in Gibraltar. Some of us believe that, whether one likes it or not—it may be very unpleasant—there is a link. As Secretary of State for Defence, did the right hon. Gentleman know about the SAS operation before it happened?

Mr. Younger: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point. It is indeed a formidable task, but that does not mean that we should not do everything we can to improve security and protect our service men whom, after all, we ask to do a job for us.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, I, like anyone else, should not anticipate the results of an inquest.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend tell those few friends of terrorism on the Opposition Benches—and there are some—that, in this democracy, the vast majority of people—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that remark should be made in the House. Every Member is an honourable Member of this House and should not be associated with that remark.

Mr. Marlow: I did not say that they were not honourable Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that allegation about Opposition Members.

Mr. Marlow: I withdraw that remark, but those hon. Members on the Opposition Benches who, by their actions, give support and assistance to terrorism——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is almost as bad. The hon. Gentleman would not wish that allegation to be made about Members on his side of the House, and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) brought into the House a member of the IRA——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman not to take issue with me. Will he please withdraw that comment?

Mr. Marlow: I withdraw that, but I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to point out to those hon. Members on the Opposition Benches who perhaps inadvertently by their actions give support to terrorists that in this democracy the vast majority of people, aware that three young airmen have been gunned down without warning and in cold blood, are not over-squeamish about the way in which IRA murderers meet their end.

Mr. Younger: I certainly very much hope that the tragic events that took place on Sunday will convince anyone who is not absolutely convinced of the evil of terrorism.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Leaving aside the disgusting smear against the Opposition made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), what evidence is there that the continued killings and slaughter of innocent people by the Provisional IRA will change the minds of the British people about terrorism? If the British people have not changed their minds in 17 years and in four or five general elections—and the same applies to people in the Irish Republic—why should the Provisional IRA leadership believe that if they continue to kill and carry out atrocities there will be any change of mind on the part of the British electorate?

Mr. Younger: I very much appreciate what the hon. Gentleman has said. I agree that there is no sign of anyone's opinion changing. That makes it all the more awful that young lives should be lost in so pointless a manner.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend accept that in these grievous times it is sad to hear a leading spokesman for the Opposition on Northern Ireland affairs say that two wrongs do not make a right? Does not that mean that someone has judged that those who shoot down those who want to blow up other people are guilty and that those who commit these heinous offences are adjudged right? Have we come to the time when Opposition Members say that those who defend justice are wrong and that those who do wrong are right?

Mr. Younger: I do not believe that such a link can be drawn. It could be drawn only if this was an isolated, single instance, the like of which had never been seen before. Unfortunately, we must all admit that this is part of a long series of such attacks, all of which are pointless and result in the loss of completely innocent lives.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): In joining my right hon. and hon. Friends from Northern Ireland in extending sympathy to the families in England and Scotland—where many of our kith and kin from Northern Ireland live—may I ask the Secretary of State whether he is aware that changing car plate numbers is no answer to the problem of security for service personnel? Does he understand that there has been a significant increase in IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland and in Europe during the past two and a half years? Will he sit back and reflect on what political message Her Majesty's Government gave to the IRA two and a half years ago?

Mr. Younger: I note with interest what the right hon. Gentleman has said about number plates. I have said that we will look carefully at that question, but, as I said earlier, the solution is not quite as simple as it seems. However, we will certainly look at that possibility. The other issues raised by the right hon. Gentleman are principally matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Would my right hon. Friend care to contemplate with me that if the SAS had been on hand and had shot those terrorists who killed our Air Force personnel they might have found themselves condemned as they were condemned in a speech made by an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman over the weekend on May day in the north-east of England who described the Gibraltar killings as official state execution? Is not that the language that supports the IRA?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the point made by my hon. Friend which will not have escaped the notice of many people who read the press in this country.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): As someone who spent four and a quarter years in the Royal Air Force during the second world war, and who served with people from Northern Ireland and southern Ireland, may I state that no one in this House can possibly accept the shooting down of ordinary, young, basic and—I would imagine—working-class people in the armed forces who were there because they felt that it was right to join the forces?

None of us who believe in a peaceful settlement to the problems of Ireland can accept that violence is the answer. Those of us who argued that we did not agree with state violence cannot accept any other violence. The answer is to get people around the table and to talk in terms of solving the problems of Northern Ireland by political means and not by violence.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the sentiments that lie behind the hon. Gentleman's comments. He is making the point that, when those young airmen were on duty, they were simply doing their duty; and that when they were enjoying their recreation, they were enjoying it as anyone else might do. The hon. Gentleman's remarks underline the fact that violence is not likely to help the ultimate causes at which those who run the terrorists think they wish to aim.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Have the Government received any offers from the Irish Government to help to bring the perpetrators of this appalling crime to justice?

Mr. Younger: I noticed that the Irish Government made a statement deploring the crime very shortly after it was committed.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): International co-operation has rightly been identified by my right hon. Friend as being essential for the defeat of the scourge of terrorism. Is he satisfied that agreements such as the Trevi agreement are fully and effectively implemented by their signatories?

Mr. Younger: There is under the Trevi agreement a willingness to make progress, but we have not yet achieved sufficient co-operation to be sure that we are being effective against terrorism.

Seafarers (Strike)

4.1 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the nationwide strike by British seafarers."

The strike has been directly caused by the action of the P and O company. That company, which pays substantial sums to the Tory party, is seeking higher profits by trying to impose slave labour conditions on its employees, which could, as a result of the exhaustion of its employees, also risk the lives and safety of those who travel on Channel ferries, as occurred at Zeebrugge. The company has dismissed those who refused to accept those conditions, has broken long-standing agreements with the union, and has withdrawn recognition from that union. The employers are now applying to the courts for sequestration of NUS funds. The situation could hardly be more serious for seafarers, upon whom this country, as a maritime nation, has always relied in protecting its lifelines in times of war.

The Government are responsible for the legislation designed to destroy trade unionism upon which millions of working people depend to safeguard their wages, working conditions and safety. The Labour party supports the seamen's action and the House must be allowed to debate the matter urgently. It is not sufficient to leave the matter to the courts or to the mass media, which have never shown any real understanding of these matters.

If the House of Commons disregards calls for help from those who need our protection from injustice, protestations about parliamentary democracy will sound increasingly shallow and unconvincing. I beg you, Mr. Speaker, to allow the seafarers' case to be heard here tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the nationwide strike by British seafarers."

I listened with care and attention to what was said by the right hon. Gentleman. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I cannot find that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and therefore I cannot submit his application to the House.

Hospital Closures (Northern Ireland)

4.4 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closing of the Cushendall hospital and the axing of acute hospital services at Dalmiadia hospital, Ballycastle, and at the Route hospital, Ballymoney."

Those hospitals, along with others, have served a population of 37,000 people. The axing of them and of acute hospital services in my constituency means that some of my constituents will have to travel up to 25 miles to obtain acute hospital services. All the other boards in Northern Ireland will, even after the cuts, have more acute hospital beds available to them than will the constituency of North Antrim, whose board area also stretches into part of Londonderry. If the Government wish to implement a policy that leaves only 500 beds available in an area of 370,000 people, then the Government are saying to the people that they are not interested in the health care of the community.

We have received warnings that in the coming days there will be more IRA attacks and that more innocent people will be gunned down. Those people will need acute hospital services to be available to them. This is the only place where I, as a public representative, can raise this matter. I raise it today and ask that the House gives time to discussing it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closing of the Cushendall hospital and the axing of hospital services at Dalmaidia hospital, Ballycastle, and at the Route hospital, Ballymoney."

I listened with concern to what was said by the hon. Gentleman, and I can well understand the impact that the decisions will have on his constituency in Northern Ireland. However, I must give him the same answer that I gave to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I regret that this matter is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot submit the hon. Gentleman's application to the House.

Hon. Member for Dover

4.7 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any communication from the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), and in particular have you received a request from him to be given an opportunity to make a personal statement withdrawing the wrongful accusations of support for acts of violence and intimidation which he levelled at several of my right hon. and hon. Friends last Thursday?

A personal retraction would follow the precedent set, for example, last year by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and by Mr. Willie Hamilton, then the Member for Fife, Central. It would also follow an earlier precedent set by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), after the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), then the Leader of the Opposition, complained that what he had said was a personal reflection on her.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no request from the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) to make a personal statement. I have received from him a letter setting out the background to his remarks during business questions last Thursday.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): If it would help, Mr. Speaker, I should be delighted to clarify certain matters, as you invited me to do last Thursday. It may be that the clarification that I gave last Thursday was not sufficient. It is a matter of slight regret to me that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) raised the matter today in the way that he did. It seemed to inflame the matter further. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called the hon. Gentleman, and he is giving an explanation. It is not a personal statement, and I hope that what he is saying will not be contentious.

Mr. Shaw: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have tried to construct some words, but, as you see, some Opposition Members do not seem to wish to hear them. I tried to construct words that I thought would help the House, and those outside, to understand what has gone on. I should make it clear that what concerned me about the statement by the national executive committee of the Labour party was the loose wording that called on the Labour movement—and I quote—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the hon. Gentleman that this is not the moment to refer in detail to what he said last Thursday. If he wishes to withdraw any personal allegation that he may have unintentionally made, I should be very grateful if he would do so. That would be in the right spirit, and would satisfy the House.

Mr. Shaw: I can confirm, Mr. Speaker, that anything that I said was directed at the statement issued by the Labour national executive committee and not at individual Members of the House. I stress, however, that it was a Labour party national executive committee statement.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is quite clear, and is on the record in *Hansard*, that on 28 April the hon. Member for Dover (Mr.

[Mr. Dobson]

Shaw) said that something that had happened in his constituency—which no Opposition Member thinks should have happened—

"occurred within 24 hours of the Labour party national executive expressing solidarity with the acts of violence and intimidation".—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 509.]

There is no question; the record is clear beyond peradventure. That was not what the Labour party executive either resolved or issued to the press. The Opposition are not satisfied with the hon. Gentleman's failure to withdraw that false accusation; nor will we be satisfied until we hear a retraction from him, or disciplinary action is taken by the Leader of the House and the Tory Chief Whip, who, as you know, Mr. Speaker, spend their time prating in public and pressurising in private about the behaviour of Opposition Members. What we want is equal treatment of Conservative Members.

Mr. Speaker: We have a busy day ahead of us, and I was hoping that we would be able to dispose of this matter this afternoon. I do not think that we can profitably continue discussing it through points of order. I have reflected very carefully, and looked in *Hansard* to see whether I should at that time have exercised my discretion to get the hon. Member to withdraw what he had said. It was said in a broad sense. He did not make individual charges against individual Members of the House. It was a political argument, and many harsh political things are said in this Chamber. It would, I think, be helpful if we could now reflect on the matter and see whether we can find some other solution.

Mr. Dobson: Further to my original point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends find it difficult to believe that a specific reference to the Labour party national executive—a group of named, known people which involves 12 right hon. and hon. Members—is just a vague smear, which is what your ruling suggests. This "vague smear", which is untruthful, is apparently acceptable in the House. We would argue, however, that it was not a vague smear, but a direct untruth about the activities and actions of 12 right hon. and hon. Members. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider the matter, and examine the precedents that I have cited and what was said before the withdrawals by three of my hon. Friends. I think that you will find that the precedent is and should be binding on the hon. Member for Dover.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not seen the statement put out by the national executive. What I heard on Thursday was an allegation that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) had said something rather derogatory about members of the national executive. It was a political matter—and harsh things are frequently said across the Floor of this Chamber in political argument—but it was not out of order.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As reported in column 522 of *Hansard* for 28 April, the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) referred to two Members of the House of Commons. As I was on the picket line on the afternoon when the hon. Gentleman made his statement, I am not prepared to have my reputation impugned in that way. When I was on the picket line that day, I asked the union's permission to speak, and I spoke in favour of the workers' side of the dispute. They have a right to strike and to receive support. What I will not tolerate is being associated with the idea that I am in favour of vandalising a person's house, or of violence or threats.

Very few hon. Members have had the sort of treatment from the media that my family and I have received. As a result, my son was assaulted by 20 hooligans. His jaw was broken, and he was put in hospital. My wife was reduced to tears in public houses, refused service in shops and spat at. We received hate mail with razor blades sewn into envelopes. No Conservative Member or anyone else can accuse me of being in favour of vandalism or of violence.

I ask for the statement to be withdrawn. It is a disgrace to me; it is a disgrace to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer); it is a disgrace to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn); it is a disgrace to all the members of the national executive; and, in my opinion, it is a disgrace to the House.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Whether or not my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) commented on a broad political issue, it may be helpful for me, as the Member representing the adjoining constituency, to point out that, whatever acts of intimidation and violence may have occurred, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who was in the area all the weekend, has used his best endeavours to defuse the tensions and has completely disassociated himself—and, I understand, the Labour party as a whole—from the acts of violence. If Labour Front Benchers could simply make it clear that they confirm those attitudes—*[Interruption.]*—I think that the matter could be buried completely.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the whole House accepts that the Labour Front Bench—indeed, any Member of the House, including the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall)—would not advocate violence of any kind. I think that we should reflect further on the matter.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to column 522 of *Hansard* for 28 April? It includes the statement that

"at least two hon. Members are on the picket line at the moment and, as I understand it, are encouraging the very acts to which I referred earlier".—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 522.]

Let us refer back to those allegations about two hon. Members. They were of acts of violence and intimidation.

The issue is very simple. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) has made an allegation against two of my hon. Friends. Two weeks ago, you rightly asked my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) to come to the House and make a personal statement, agreed with you through the Clerk of the House. I put it to you that this matter requires precisely the same response from the hon. Member for Dover. Opposition Members look to the hon. Gentleman to agree a statement with you withdrawing the allegations, and for him to make that statement tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall consider that, but I think that it would be very helpful if the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) were to say today that he was not reflecting on the honour of any two Members of the House.

Mr. David Shaw: I am happy to confirm the words which you, Mr. Speaker, have just used.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should go a little further than that and say that he was not alleging that the two hon. Members who were on the picket line were encouraging acts of violence.

Mr. Shaw: I did not intend to allege those matters. As I said earlier, I was referring solely to a statement that had been issued by the Labour party national executive committee.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has, I think, withdrawn those allegations against the two hon. Members concerned. I do not think that we can carry the matter any further this afternoon.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon, you rightly required the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to withdraw a very generalised accusation of support for terrorism among some unspecified Opposition Members. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily to rule now, but to consider the matter further. You having ruled out of order generalised complaints and accusations against unspecified hon. Members made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North, it must be out of order for an hon. Member to say that 12 hon. Members who are known by name had expressed solidarity with acts of violence and intimidation. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will consider the matter further and give a ruling tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps the wisest thing would be for me to give careful consideration to what has been said this afternoon.

Later——

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since you, Mr. Speaker, and the House wish to clarify all matters outstanding from last week, particularly from 28 April, may I draw your attention to column 520 of *Hansard?* The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) quite clearly said:

"The hon. Member for Dover is a liar."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 520.]

While you, Mr. Speaker, are of a mind to tie up the loose ends which may remain from last week, and in order to clarify these matters and to straighten out the question of the honour of the House, I now expect that you will call upon the hon. Member for Walsall, North fully to withdraw his words about my hon. Friend.

Mr. Speaker: There was a great deal of noise on Thursday. It may well be in *Hansard* because it is referred to later. The hon. Member must know that, at this end of the Chamber, the Chair frequently does not hear comments that are made below the Gangway. Perhaps that is just as well. I certainly did not hear that comment, and I said so at the time.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I appeal to the House to forget this whole business? As an hon. Member who was accused of saying all sorts of things that I never said, and would not advocate, we have now had sufficient time on this matter and we should leave it at that. When I was asked by the press whether the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) was telling the truth, I said quite clearly "No." I believe that that is the case. I should have thought it better for us to have sufficient time tomorrow to discuss the issue of the seamen rather than the nonsense about which we have just heard.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I fully appreciate that this is a very contentious matter, but I consider it inappropriate for political issues of this kind to be discussed through the Chair.

Rating Reform

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a totally different point of order?

Mr. Home Robertson: It is a completely different point of order, Mr. Speaker, but I must say that the words of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) were the most graceless and grudging apology that I have ever heard from anybody.

May I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to do what you can to protect the rights of Scottish hon. Members to represent in the House the majority of people in Scotland? May I draw your attention to written question No. 286 in the name of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is in Strathclyde. We understand that the question is being used as a peg on which the Government can hang an announcement of selective action to cut £27 million from the budget of Lothian regional council.

In the past such action has been preceded by an oral statement in the House. As we have local elections in Scotland this Thursday, the Secretary of State for Scotland is apparently contriving to conceal the impact of this cut in services for elderly people and in schools in Edinburgh and Lothian by claiming credit for reducing rates. If there were to be an oral statement, Lothian hon. Members might be able to refer to the fact that Government cuts in rate support grant since 1979 are costing local ratepayers the equivalent of £1 a week for every citizen in the Lothian region. May I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the Scottish Office can be subjected to proper scrutiny by elected Scottish hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order; it is a matter of a question on the Order Paper. It may well be that what the hon. Member has said is right, but I have no knowledge of that. I am sure that those on the Front Bench will have heard it.

FOREIGN MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

[Lords]

Ordered,

That the Foreign Marriage (Amendment) Bill [*Lords*] be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Legal Profession (Abolition of Restrictive Practices)

4.25 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a Ministry of Justice and provide for a more competitive legal service by abolishing the status and title of Queen's Counsel, by allowing barristers to set up chambers anywhere without clerks, to advertise and to take clients without the mediation of solicitors, by allowing solicitors rights of audience in all courts, and by establishing a salaried solicitor service through a Public Defender Service and Law Shops, and for connected purposes.

The Bill would inform and improve legal services by introducing more competition. It is based on the view that the law is failing society, particularly those who are most vulnerable and most need its protection and support. It is doing that because it is pricing itself out through the endless escalation of fees.

The legal aid system is inadequate and at the point of breaking down. It cannot provide equal contest by strengthening the weak against the strong; it cannot provide those who receive legal aid with an adequate service. All too often they get the service which fell off the back of the practice or the chambers. The limits for that legal aid system are too narrow and some vulnerable people cannot use it.

Rather than being a service industry for the people, the law is becoming a self-service industry. It is serving itself and has a vested interest which is protected by restrictive practices. It is in danger of becoming a conspiracy to serve the purposes of wealth instead of people. Indeed, it has become incapable of reforming itself because the power in the two professions is in the hands of those who are doing very well out of the status quo and do not want reform.

My modest little measure proposes to deal with that by taking all legal powers, except for those of a judge and the functions of the House of Lords, away from the Lord Chancellor and setting up a Ministry of Justice such as exists in most civilised countries. That could become the dynamic for reform, to establish family courts, to end delays, to see that judges are properly trained—perhaps by sending them on an MSC scheme or to a judges' college so that they get some training—and drawn from a wider range than their present restricted backgrounds. It would be a ministry answerable to the House of Commons—to us.

Secondly, the Bill provides competition, which is in an appropriate dynamic for change because it compels service to the people. The biggest barrier to competition has been the conspiracy to protect fees and to ensure their continuous escalation by restrictive practices.

Therefore, I propose, first, that we should abolish the rank of QC, which is largely a self-appointed clique of those already earning more than £100,000 a year and dedicated to pushing the fees even higher. Let the market decide on grounds of excellence rather than this artificial appointment. If we do that, we can get rid of the two-counsel convention—which is no longer a rule but it is still a convention—which requires people to pay fees of up to £1,000 a day for a QC and £500 a day for a junior, in addition to the fees to the solicitor, as the third in the party.

Let us liberate the spontaneous feelings of the two legal professions for each other, which is otherwise described as mutual loathing, by allowing solicitors rights of audience in all courts, so that the customer can decide who shall represent him in the court he chooses, and by allowing barristers to set up anywhere without those monopoly managers—the barristers' clerks—manipulating them to push up their own earnings. Let us make it possible for young barristers to break into the profession by setting up anywhere, and doing what might be described as pricing themselves into jobs by setting themselves up in practice to serve wherever and in any way they want. Let us also allow barristers to advertise and to take customers without the intermediary of a solicitor, just as they do overseas, and to sue solicitors for fees.

Finally, the Bill will improve competition and break the stranglehold of private practice by setting up a paid legal service to compete—just as there is competition within the NHS—with private practice. The customer will be able to choose to whom he should turn for service. We can thereby cut out much of the waste which is at present endemic in the legal-aid system. Solicitors are being paid £40 an hour, which is a premium for them to prevaricate and extend cases by dragging out the argument, thereby creating a bottomless pit into which money has to be thrown.

We can get round that problem by a salaried service with an independent legal services commission to ensure that services are properly available to the people.

First, there should be a public defender service, as in the United States—for example, in Orange county, California—which would cut out all the petty corruption and touting for business which goes on in criminal legal-aid cases in the bigger cities.

Secondly, law shops should be set up in town centres, not where the housing market is lushest, to ensure that people get the best service and advice. Law shops would deal with the types of cases that affect people in their everyday lives, such as employment, social security and one individual's rights—those areas where the legal profession is failing them at present. Law shops will be able to employ barristers and solicitors to provide that service.

I would have hoped that a Government who proclaim their attachment to competition would tackle such restrictive practices without having to be pushed into it, as they were, first, by the legislation which took away the monopoly on conveyancing, for which the Conservative party claimed credit in its manifesto, but into which it had to be pushed, and, secondly, by a measure such as this. It seems illogical to refer television practices to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but not to refer the far greater range of restrictive practices carried on by the legal profession.

I had also hoped that the law would reform itself, but people who are doing well out of the present situation have a vested interest in not reforming it and that reform has not come. Therefore, it falls to Parliament to act to ensure that people receive the proper and efficient legal service that is their due. The law is there to serve them in all their problems and in all those areas where their rights have to be defended, rather than simply to serve its own interests for its own enrichment, as it does at present.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mrs. Teresa Gorman, Mr. Tim Janman, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Alun Michael and Mr. Rhodri Morgan.

LEGAL PROFESSION (ABOLITION OF RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES)

Mr. Austin Mitchell accordingly presented a Bill to establish a Ministry of Justice and provide for a more competitive legal service by abolishing the status and title of Queen's Counsel, by allowing barristers to set up chambers anywhere without clerks, to advertise and to take clients without the mediation of solicitors, by allowing solicitors rights of audience in all courts, and by establishing a salaried solicitor service through a Public Defender Service and Law Shops, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 155.]

Orders of the Day

Finance (No. 2) Bill

(Clauses Nos. 22, 23, 26 to 28, 31, 42, 49, 91, 98, 127 and 128 and Schedule No. 7)

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair.*]

Ordered,

That the order in which proceedings in Committee of the whole House on the Finance (No. 2) Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 22, Clause 23, Clause 27, Clause 28, Clause 49, Clause 31, Clause 98, Clause 26, Clause 127, Clause 91, Schedule 7, Clause 128, Clause 42.—*[Mr. Lamont.]*

Clause 22

CHARGE AND BASIC RATE OF INCOME TAX FOR 1988-89

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

4.33 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): We start the Committee stage of this year's Finance Bill with what most hon. Members will accept are by far the most important measures in the Bill. Clause 22 reduces the basic rate of income tax in 1988-89 to 25 per cent. and clause 23 sets a single higher rate of 40 per cent. We shall debate both clauses together, but there will be separate votes on them both.

Taken together those clauses produce a radical simplification of our personal income tax structure. The difference over recent years is startling. In 1979 we inherited a system of 11 rates of tax on earned income and of a further two rates of tax on what the Opposition tend to call "unearned" income. This provided special punitive rates on the product of savings and investment even though investment then—as now—is critically important to our economic success.

In 1979 we reduced the number of tax rates to eight. In 1984 we abolished the investment income surcharge. This Finance Bill now carries this progressive simplification further and establishes a system with only two rates of personal tax. As a result, it enables the taxation of capital gains to be aligned with income tax. It now gives us one of the simplest structures of personal income tax anywhere in the world.

These measures are central to our policy of tax reduction and reform. They reflect our belief that people know better than Governments how to spend their own money in their own interest and on their own behalf and should be enabled to do so. We also believe that they are less likely to work productively if they are over-taxed and are not allowed to keep a greater share of the rewards of harder work and greater productivity. We believe, too, that a low tax environment will ensure that people make less use of the tax shelters which are endemic to any high tax regime, and, crucially, that they will be more willing to take risks if they know that successful risk-taking brings a worthwhile return. Those are all key factors in creating the culture for enterprise that is so essential to maintaining a growing economy.

Clause 22 redeems the promise that we made in our manifesto last year—to reduce the basic rate of income tax

[Mr. John Major]

to 25p in the pound. It is by no means a new target, but an aim that we first set in 1979. By last year we had reduced the basic rate of income tax from the 33p in the pound that we inherited to 27p—within 2p of the objective set by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) in 1979. That was the record and the promise on which we fought the general election. The substantial question before the Committee today is whether the basic rate should now be reduced to a quarter, fulfilling that election pledge which was so warmly endorsed last June.

I recognise that for a variety of reasons the Opposition dislike tax cuts. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley),—who in those halcyon days was the Opposition spokesman on the economy—called last year's tax cuts "a failed publicity stunt." They were not a stunt, and they were not a failure. The tax cuts go on to benefit the economy, and the right hon. Gentleman has moved on.

The truth is that lower taxes benefit millions of ordinary taxpayers. The basic rate is the marginal rate for 94 per cent. of all income taxpayers and for 90 per cent. of unincorporated businesses. This year the marginal rate for basic rate taxpayers will be 8p in the pound lower than the rate that we inherited from Labour, and the lowest that it has been since before the war.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the total amount of the gross national product consumed by taxation has risen by about 5 per cent., if my memory serves me correctly, from 34 per cent. to 39 per cent. since the Government came to office, and that what he is talking about is the reduction in the rate of income tax?

Mr. Major: I can certainly confirm that we are talking about income tax and that there has been an increase in the gross take from taxation. I am happy to confirm that to the hon. Gentleman. It underlines the fact that we are keen to continue to reduce taxation, but we do not yet believe that we have reduced it sufficiently. I shall return to that particular point in a few moments.

Twenty-three million taxpayers now have a marginal rate of 25p compared to a mere 4½ million taxpayers who benefited from a reduced rate band under the Labour Government.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Gentleman seemed to take pride in reducing the number of tax rates. Other countries think it quite reasonable to have a progressive system. In fact, under the Conservative Government before 1964 there were three reduced bands, then there was the standard rate, and there were the 11 rates of surtax. They did not think that was wrong. They felt that it was right that people should come gently into tax and pay on a progressive basis. Why the sudden change?

Mr. Major: There are other countries of the same political persuasion as the right hon. Gentleman that share our view that there should be a simple tax rate and a low high-tax rate. That is a matter to which I shall be returning. That is fundamental to the case that I wish to put to the Committee in this debate.

Under the last Labour Government the reduced rate band covered only £750 of taxable income. Our 25p band —the same rate as the reduced band that applied before 1979—covers not £750 of taxable income, but £19,300 of taxable income. Nor should we forget that personal allowances are now 25 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79, and the married man's allowance is at its highest level since the war. By contrast, personal allowances fell between 1974 and 1979. The overall burden of income tax is now £20 billion lower than it would have been if we had kept Labour's regime and simply adjusted allowances and thresholds for inflation.

The benefits of these tax reductions have been felt at each and every level of taxable income. The percentage of earnings taken in income tax and national insurance contributions is now lower at all levels than if we had kept the regime that we inherited and simply indexed it. For example, a nurse this year will pay around £12 less in tax than she would have done under the regime that we inherited; and she is now paid much more, too. Furthermore, not only does she pay less tax and is paid more, but there are more nurses than there were before, which reflects our public expenditure priorities.

We have already come a long way in our tax changes, but we do not think—I pick up the point made by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)—that we have yet reduced tax sufficiently. The rate of tax for the majority of taxpayers in this country is still too high. That is why, having fulfilled one pledge, we have set a new one: to reduce the basic rate of tax to 20p in the pound—not rashly, not irresponsibly, not even necessarily speedily, but as soon as we prudently and sensibly can. That would give us a starting rate of tax generally in line with that in other countries, although, of course, covering far more people. Opposition Back Benchers have from time to time taken us to task in recent debates for our "failure" to reduce the tax burden. I agree with them. We have not done enough and more must be done. We welcome their conversion, however belated, to the cause of lower taxes. They are only nine years and three general elections behind the majority of voters in this country. The voters in those three general elections were all, of course, behind us.

However, Opposition Back-Bench support is simply not enough. We would welcome the support also of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Front Bench for our policy of reducing taxation. Last year, their spokesman, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, made their position perfectly clear well in advance of the Budget. Indeed, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who will be speaking later, may recall the words of his predecessor to the International Equity Dealers Association last January, when he said:

> "When the Chancellor cuts the standard rate, as he undoubtedly will, the Labour Party will vote against it in the House of Commons. What is more, we will reverse that decision when we are elected and return to approximately the present level of taxation."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman's prediction about the election result was about as accurate as his later claim that the Conservative Government would not be able to sustain their tax cuts. We have not only sustained them, but extended them.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I will give way in a moment.

Although the right hon. and learned Gentleman may not have been clairvoyant, at least he did tell us what his policy was, even if it was not always completely convincing. I do not wish to sound unreasonable, but it always seemed to me to be rather unlikely that Labour could finance its £35 billion spending programme at "approximately the present level of taxation".

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, regrettably, was not invited to speak to the International Equity Dealers Association this January—no doubt by an oversight—so we have to turn to other sources for his pre-Budget judgment. Here the seminal document is *Woman's Own* of 12 March 1988. Bemoaning the fate of a shadow Chancellor, it said:

"John Smith has a Budget too. The trouble is no one will hear it."

I offer the right hon. and learned Gentleman an invitation. In a few minutes he will have the Floor. I am sure that I speak for this side of the Committee when I say that we would love to hear what the right hon. and learned Gentleman might have put in his Budget.

The Chairman: Order. Not in Committee.

Mr. Major: Perhaps, Mr. Walker, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) or the right hon. and learned Gentleman some time later will share with us some of the thoughts on taxation that are relevant to this clause and that the right hon. and learned Gentleman shared with the readers of *Woman's Own,* when he said that he

"doesn't subscribe to reductions in income tax",

although he would support

"a change in the thresholds, so that more people on low incomes don't pay tax, and a lower bottom rate of tax, perhaps"—

note "perhaps"; not "certainly", but "perhaps"—

"but no other changes and certainly not for the big earners."

That, at least, is clear.

4.45 pm

Mr. Winnick: It is noted, at least on this side of the Committee, that the right hon. Gentleman is making very little reference to indirect taxation. All his emphasis is on income tax. As someone who makes no apology for the fact that he believes that there are occasions and times when a decrease in the standard rate of taxation is not justified—I made my views clear last week—I ask the right hon. Gentleman to recognise that accompanying the decrease to 25 per cent. is the starvation of essential services in the National Health Service with ward closures, even hospital closures, and long, long waiting lists. In my own borough, for example, a new extension to the general hospital cannot be opened——

The Chairman: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are debating income tax.

Mr. Winnick: All I am saying, Mr. Walker, is that if there is a choice between what the right hon. Gentleman is now proposing and, for example, the general hospital extension that cannot be put into use once it is completed because of the lack of cash, at least the Opposition know their priority.

Mr. Major: I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman puts extremely clearly. I remind him that we increased public expenditure on priority programmes by £4·5 billion—rather more than the tax cuts—in the public expenditure round that was concluded last autumn. As he will know from the additions made then and subsequently to the health budget in particular, very large sums indeed have been directed to priority programmes, for we share his concerns.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): As the right hon. Gentleman finds articles in *Woman's Own* of interest in the debate, does he agree with the observations of Lord Whitelaw that will appear in next week's edition of *Woman's Own*—I am reliably informed that *The Sunday Times* and other journals have got it right, and certainly there has been no denial from the noble Lord—that the bad side of the Thatcher Government is that

"there are a lot of people very interested in making a lot of money, and not very interested in anything else that goes on. A little compassion is needed."

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a bit more compassion is needed from this Government?

Mr. Major: It is rather difficult to comment on an article that has not yet appeared and a report that may or may not be accurate. In view of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's invitation, I shall most assuredly read next week's *Woman's Own.* I am sure that we shall have plenty of opportunities in Standing Committee to return to this point, and I look forward to that opportunity. I have no idea whatsoever what my noble Friend may have said in an interview in *Woman's Own,* which has not yet been published and about which I have not spoken to him.

Mr. Smith: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not imagine for one moment that I would misquote. That was a direct quotation from Lord Whitelaw. He said:

"a little compassion is needed."

Is that a fair comment on this Government, or is it not?

Mr. Major: I accept what the right hon. and learned Gentleman says, but my noble Friend has specifically made it clear that his criticism generally in that article was directed at yuppies, not at the Government—*[Interruption.]* I have read *The Times* report. I have not yet read *Woman's Own.* Nor, I think, has the right hon. and learned Gentleman, unless he is clairvoyant, because it has not yet been published.

There is one way in which Opposition Members have been consistent, and I am happy to award them a point for that. Clause 23, which abolishes all higher rates above 40 per cent., has been the subject of repeated and often relatively passionate attacks by Opposition Members. *[Interruption.]* Only relatively; moderation still exists even in some quarters of the Labour party. We are clear that Opposition Members dislike that proposal. We are also fairly clear about why they dislike that measure. They dislike tax cuts because they know that they have been bringing about increasing prosperity. Prosperity and Labour party philosophy do not mix, and the country is well aware of that. We have repeatedly told the House of Commons of the benefits that we believe the reduction in the top rates of tax will bring and that our economic performance has improved.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Minister read the document entitled "Taxation and Family Labour Supply in Great Britain" by Mr. C. V. Brown? Does he accept any part of it? Does he recognise that it says that so-called tax incentives do not work in the way that he suggests? Is he writing off the report? What is his view? Is the report relevant?

Mr. Major: I have not read in detail the report to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. But it is crystal clear, to those who wish to see, that since 1979 we have pursued a policy of reducing tax rates. Since 1979, there has been a substantial growth in prosperity and in the economy of this country. There is a causal link between the two events. I am not necessarily required to read each and every article that may or may not have been written on a certain subject.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister understand that his Government—his Department—commissioned the report? It drew on a sample of 8,000 addressees, yielding 7,751 households. The information that it provided was crucial when the Chancellor was considering this year's Budget, but the Minister now tells us that he has not read it and has not considered it. Yet the Chancellor has gone forward and allocated £2 billion to the better-off in society in the form of cuts in higher tax rates.

Mr. Major: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman way I did not read the report. He is suffering under the misapprehension that it may have been commissioned by the present Government. He is wholly wrong. It was actually commissioned by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) some time ago. In no sense was it commissioned by the present Government. It may be for that reason that it has not been brought to my attention.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Regardless of what any academic report may state, does not common sense suggest that if tax rates are high, people will work less hard than if tax rates are low? From what we have heard this afternoon, is it not clear that Opposition Members do not have an income tax policy? We have heard from some Opposition Members that the tax burden is too high and should be reduced, and from others we have heard that they want to see a higher rate of income tax.

Mr. Major: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. It is clear that, as it is common sense, it does not necessarily appeal to Opposition Members.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the problems in the business world today is that the unincorporated sector is at a disadvantage compared with the corporate sector? The risk: reward ratio for those who pay direct schedule D taxation is far too daunting. Something needs to be done, and this measure will help with the problem.

Mr. Major: I agree with my hon. Friend. I was proposing to refer to that matter later.

A low tax system encourages risk taking and does not deter it. That refers to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) had in mind. It also makes the United Kingdom an attractive place for those with internationally tradeable skills and talents to work in and to invest in. In a competitive world, we compete for money and people in a global market. Both are footloose. They go to the least hostile environment. The United Kingdom simply could not survive as an island of high taxation in a sea of low tax economies, without doing irreparable harm to our international competitiveness and our ability to retain talent and attract investment.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall give way. There is no need for him to behave in that fashion.

Mr. Morgan: The right hon. Gentleman has stated that, in his opinion, economic growth advanced rapidly under the Conservative Government when direct taxes fell. Perhaps he would like to consider the fact that, in the nine years since the Thatcher Government—the present Government—came to power, the international oil price has risen by 80 per cent. During the five years of the previous Labour Government, the international oil price rose by 80 per cent. a year! Will he consider whether that has had an even greater impact on any change in prosperity?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman might care to bear in mind that oil revenues are now less than 2 per cent. of revenue and have fallen quite dramatically in the past few years. In the Japanese tax system, there are certainly higher rates of tax, but only at extraordinarily high rates of income. We have chosen a different system for the reasons that we have set out before the House of Commons and that I am now setting out before the Committee.

In a competitive world, skills and investment go to the least hostile environment. Opposition Members who focus on the month-by-month changes in our balance of payments might do better to contemplate the longer term damage to our economy if we drive out that investment and repel that talent. The importance of that talent is the extent to which it brings investment and employment to those regions of the country that still require it. Of course, I recognise that Opposition Members neither accept nor understand such arguments, and they never have.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I have given way quite sufficiently in the past few minutes. I shall give way a little later to the hon. Gentleman if he is still enthusiastic.

In 1979, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East confessed that he was mystified by the Chancellor's belief that

"somehow or other his cuts in income tax will transform economic performance in the boardroom and on the shop floor."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1969; Vol. 968, c. 469.]

He is still mystified, despite the evidence before him of our changed circumstances. Opposition Members believe that people will put in the same effort, take the same risks and make the same investment decisions if an extra £1 earned brings in 17p, 40p or 60p. That flies in the face not just of basic economics but of basic common sense—not just of common sense, but of what has happened in the past few years.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): From the study that was quoted earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), is the right hon. Gentleman aware that only 19 per cent. of the people who were interviewed said that they could work more paid hours if the opportunity were available? Is he aware also that 81 per cent. said that they were so dependent on existing processes of industry that, even if they were given more incentive, they could not work more? Does that not confirm that the Japanese have the right answer?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is referring to a report that, for the reasons that I have given, I have not read. It was not commissioned by this Government. The information that has just been passed to me suggests that it dealt only with short-term effects. It does not in any way address the points that we are seeking to make, for we are looking at a tax regime not just for the short term but for the long term. That is the way that we plan in this country.

For example, in 1979 the venture capital industry in this country was almost non-existent. Last year, it invested over £1 billion. In 1980, the first year of the unlisted securities market, £12½ million was invested in new issues. Last year, it was £191 million, and £40 million was invested in the new third market. Since 1983, when it was first started, over 3,000 companies have used the business expansion scheme to raise £750 million. Opposition Members still see no link between willingness to invest and the prospect of greater returns, yet the link is clearly there for all to see. Nor is it confined to people putting their own money into other people's businesses. Since 1979, self-employment has grown by 1 million—more than 50 per cent. That is six times the increase recorded in the previous 30 years. New businesses have been created at the net rate of around 500 a week. Yet again that is evidence that the Opposition prefer to ignore.

We have repeatedly pointed to the evidence that reduced marginal rates benefit not only the economy but the Exchequer. Lower tax rates reduce incentive for higher rate taxpayers to shelter their incomes from punitive taxation, through elaborate tax avoidance devices. Higher rate taxpayers now contribute more revenue than ever before. In 1978-79 higher rate taxpayers contributed only 20 per cent. of total income tax revenue and in 1988-89 they will contribute 30 per cent. To put it another way, under the Labour Government, 80 per cent. of income tax revenue came from basic rate taxpayers; this year they will contribute 70 per cent. That is not because we have soaked the rich, but because we have given them the incentive to create wealth and the tax revenues have benefited.

As Opposition Members appear to have forgotten, I remind them that our view is not some British idiosyncrasy; it is shared by the Governments of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Labour Treasurer of Australia and the Labour Finance Minister of New Zealand share our view on the futility of punitive taxation and of the damage that it does to economic performance.

5 pm

Because of our policies, we now have the highest growth rate in the EEC and we shall make sure that that growth rate continues. Not one Opposition spokesman——

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Major: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman once, which was not wise, and I shall not do so again.

Not one Opposition spokesman has succeeded in refuting these assertions or has even tried. Nor have they denied the evidence, for they cannot. Instead, they pretend that it does not exist. They have fallen back on those old familiar cliches that do nothing to advance the argument or persuade the House of Commons or the country that they are right and we are wrong.

Mr. Worthington *rose*——

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) must be the only hon. Gentleman to whom I have not given way, so I will do so.

Mr. Worthington: I realise that my hon. Friends are extremely unreasonable in expecting the Minister to have read a document that is relevant to his brief. However, will he confirm that, since receiving his increase in income through the tax cuts, he has smartened himself up considerably and is working harder?

Mr. Major: That is a matter for others to judge. I am far too modest to say that I worked pretty hard before and shall continue to work pretty hard.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Before leaving these points, will the Minister tell us what share of the total income tax cuts has gone to the top 1 per cent?

Mr. Major: As the hon. Gentleman knows, vast amounts of the cuts in income tax have gone to people on the basic rate or on the threshold. The hon. Gentleman knows that to be the case. If he requires the precise figure, my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will provide it in his reply to the debate. In terms of the total, the majority of the resources have gone towards reducing the basic rate from 27p to 25p and to raising the threshold at which people commence paying income tax. That is a benefit to every taxpayer in the country to a greater or lesser extent.

Mr. Brown: If the Chief Secretary cannot give me one of the more important figures arising from the Budget, will he confirm the figure that the Financial Secretary gave to me on Friday? I was told that the top 1 per cent, taking into account income tax reductions, personal allowances and top tax rate reductions, have had 31 per cent. of the income tax cuts and the top 5 per cent. have had 44 per cent? How does the Minister defend that?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said a few moments ago. I made the point clearly that higher rate taxpayers contributed only 20 per cent. of total income tax a few years ago. This year they will contribute 30 per cent. The hon. Gentleman might bear that in mind.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Major: No, I will not give way. I have given way twice to the hon. Gentleman who will have every opportunity later to catch Mr. Walker's eye.

Noone will deny the passion that Opposition Members feel on the subject of higher rate tax cuts. They are passionate in their wish to penalise success. They are passionate in their desire to reduce returns from investment. That is what fires the Labour party. Opposition Members are passionate in their wish to make risk-taking an unrewarding enterprise, notwithstanding the effect that will have on those people who do not have jobs and who perhaps would get them. None of the passion of Opposition Members is any good for Britain, which is what people have observed in the past three general elections.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Perhaps the Chief Secretary does not believe that people in this country want to contribute and be part of a country that cares for all people. Some of those tax earners may feel a responsibility to demonstrate their care and concern for the rest of the country. That is not to say that they should

[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]

not contribute. Many of them would contribute and be happy to do so. In fact, they are benefiting from the better things in society. Does the right hon. Gentleman want them to contribute?

Mr. Major: I agree with much of what the hon. Lady has said. There is no doubt that the British nation is remarkably openhanded and will contribute to society. We have seen that time and again during the past few years. We have now established a payroll-giving scheme for those who wish to contribute on a structured basis. The hon. Lady is talking not about the openhandedness of those who wish to contribute, but about the compulsion of the Government imposing taxes, so that there is no choice but to contribute. That is a different proposition.

Without the facts Opposition Members have found it difficult to provide any substance for their claim that the Government are creating a poorer society. Therefore, they have accused us of creating a more unequal and unfair society. They are wrong. In the 1970s, the price paid for the sort of artificial equality that they sought was high. In their last period in government it meant a fall in living standards for single people at all multiples of average earnings and a virtual standstill in living standards for a married man with children on average earnings—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) may not like it—that may be why the hon. Gentleman could not get elected on earlier occasions—but it is a fact.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Major: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman on several occasions and I shall not do so again.

There was also only a tiny increase in real take-home pay for the average nurse over a five-year period.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I have been exceedingly generous in giving way so far and I now wish to make progress.

That was the price that ordinary working people had to pay under the Labour Government, with their insistence on equality—*[Interruption.]* I will tell Opposition Members what sort of equality they produced. It was an equality they produced. It was an equality of low opportunity, low and falling living standards and misery and high taxes. It was not equality of opportunity and low taxes.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): There is nobody here who believes more than me that people have a right to expect a just return for their labour. However, there is also a need for a just return on risk and capital. Sometimes I have disagreed with things that have happened. But is it not more important that in the end, unless we are willing to give people a just reward upon that capital and upon that risk, there will not be growth? If one is going to take great risks—this country needs great risks to be taken with people's capital—and if there are not just rewards and we return to 90 per cent. taxation, why should anybody take any risk at all? That is the sense of reality that the Government have brought to this country. That is the sense of reality that we have to keep. Success should not make one a pariah.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) crystallises the point that I have been seeking to make to the Opposition for some time. My hon. Friend does it with great clarity. If Opposition Members do not accept it from me, they might accept it from my hon. Friend. I would be delighted if that were the case.

The Opposition will oppose us on clause 23, because they dislike a Budget that offers people a chance to better themselves, to make money for themselves and to create jobs for others. They prefer a tax system that clobbers those in high-tax brackets, at whatever price to the nation's success, and which does not give people the chance to improve their position. In this matter, yet again, the Labour party reveals itself to be the class party that we expect it to be so frequently. Not only that, but it is a one-class party with a vested interest in class divisions, in impeding social mobility and in destroying personal initiative. That is what the Labour party stands for. It does not seek opportunity for all; it seeks destruction of opportunity for a vast number of people. The Labour party's position on clause 23 is clear. We may not know what higher rate it favours, but at least we know what Lobby Labour Members will enter. However, on clause 22 we do not know even that. We believe that the basic rate of tax that people pay is an issue of such fundamental importance that everybody should know the Labour party's policy; they signally fail to do so at the moment.

The Labour party clearly does not know its own mind on this subject. An unusual silence has fallen over the Opposition Front Bench about the subject of the basic rate since the Budget. Even the coy, pre-Budget hints of the shadow Chancellor to *Woman's Own* have not been repeated. His natural eloquence has been stilled. We have heard nine speeches on the Budget from Labour Front-Bench spokesmen since Budget day, but not one has stated where the Labour party stands with regard to the basic rate. They have sat silent, fearing that anything they say will be taken down and used in evidence against them. Perhaps the shadow Chancellor, who is an extremely eminent advocate, has advised them to use their right of silence.

The Labour party has not only not told the Committee where it stands but, even more remarkably, it has not told the press. Over recent weeks, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has treated us to a stream of elegantly phrased press releases. No subject has been too important to ignore or too trivial to overlook. The hon. Gentleman has a press release for them all. We have not had one press release from him about a subject that affects 25 million taxpayers, despite the fact that last Tuesday *The Guardian* complimented him on

"his skill in first understanding the point and then maximising the political mileage from it."

Nobody could exceed my admiration for the hon. Gentleman. He must understand the point, so we are forced to draw the conclusion that he has realised that there is no political mileage for the Labour party in saying anything about the basic rate reduction.

Today is the Opposition's final chance to make clear where they stand on the basic rate—*[Interruption.]* Will the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East sit on his hands yet again with his tongue quiet? If he does, it will be a remarkable innovation. The Opposition can vote for the basic rate reduction—*[Interruption.]* If the right hon. and learned Gentleman would stop chattering I

would be able to concentrate. If he will stop making abusive sedentary interventions I shall stop abusing him from a standing position.

If the Labour party votes for the basic rate reduction it will be an astonishing turn around, given its previous position and the policy on which it fought the election. It is, after all, the high tax party.

Labour Members could abstain and express no view about the basic rate of tax, as they did in 1986 when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor cut the basic rate from 30p to 29p. I should remind Labour Members of the reason that their then spokesman gave for abstaining. He said:

"We will not oppose this small step towards returning to the lower level of tax to which the low paid were subject at the time of the last Labour Government."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 115.]

Will the interests of the low-paid lead Opposition Members into the Aye Lobby? The low and average paid are being offered a basic rate that is the same as Labour's reduced rate.

Labour Members could oppose the reduction, as they did in 1979 when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East reduced the basic rate from 33p to 30p. That is what they did not once but twice in 1987 when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor reduced the basic rate from 29p to 27p. At that time, the Opposition were convinced

"that at the next election the voters must be offered a clear alternative."

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made that alternative very clear, when he said:

"Cuts in the standard rate of tax across the board are not necessary for our economy and I do not believe that they are the choice or wish of our people."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 942-49.]

Is that still the Labour party's policy?

The Committee does not need to be reminded of the choice that the country made when the Labour party offered its alternative. The commitment to reverse the cut in the basic rate of tax was not the winning slogan that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook or the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) thought it would be.

5.15 pm

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East is often credited with being cannier than his predecessor. I do not know whether that is correct, but he is certainly quieter. Today is the day of reckoning—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman is quiet on policy, but he is not quiet when he is listening from the Opposition Front Bench.

I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman or the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will make it clear whether the Labour party accepts a basic rate of 25p or whether it wants a man on average earnings to pay an extra £3·32 a week in tax—the consequence of a 27p basic rate—an extra £6.64 a week in tax—the consequence of a 29p basic rate of tax—an extra £8.30 a week in tax—the consequence of a 30p basic rate of tax—or indeed an extra £13·28 a week in tax—the consequence of a 33p basic rate of tax. The average taxpayer might be moderately interested to know the Labour party's policy.

While at the Dispatch Box, the right hon. and learned Gentleman or the hon. Gentleman might like to take the opportunity to clarify one or two other questions about the Labour party's tax policy. Would it abolish the upper earnings limit for national insurance, thus creating 2 million basic rate losers, not among the super rich—whom the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) mentioned nine times in his speech the other evening—but among teachers, policemen and junior doctors, who receive no benefit from the higher rate cuts. If it did, would it increase national insurance benefits for those higher earners, thus adding further to public expenditure? Would it simply throw the contributory principle out of the window? Those are hardly second order points, but I dare say that Labour Members have never addressed them. Would the Labour party, not content with having done that, reverse higher rate cuts back to 60 per cent., 70 per cent. or 80 per cent., plus national insurance? Is it still committed, as it was in the election, to abolishing the married couple's allowance, thus putting an extra £7 a week on the tax bills of 12 million married couples? Those are legitimate points that any responsible Opposition would have made clear to the electorate.

In the good old days, the Labour party's tax policies were crystal clear. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said:

"Tax cuts are quite the wrong prescription for the British economy. Indeed they are neither economically nor socially the right choice for this country."

Does the Labour party still believe that? Are tax cuts still the wrong prescription, or is all that it can offer the "relatively blank sheet" about which the Leader of the Opposition wrote in *The Times* on 3 October? Perhaps the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would like to put ink on that blank sheet.

Clauses 22 and 23 set out clearly our tax strategy: simpler taxes, with two tax rates rather than the 13 that we inherited; fair taxes, because even after these changes a man earning £100,000 will pay 16 times as much in tax as the man on average earnings; and, above all, lower taxes with a single higher rate of 40p, a basic rate of 25p and a commitment to a basic rate of 20p as soon as that is prudent and sensible.

That prescription has given us economic success, with seven years of steady growth averaging 3 per cent. a year, and with growth of over 3 per cent. in all but one of the past five years. That growth has been combined with low inflation and increasing living standards. We wish to continue that increase in prosperity. With that in mind, I commend the clauses to the Committee.

The Chairman: Order. I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House to take clauses 22 and 23 together. The Questions on them will be put separately, so it will be in order for the Committee to seek a Division on each.

Mr. Gordon Brown: The one matter on which hon. Members can agree is that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is genuinely proud of the Government's achievements. He says that the Budget is fair, but forgets to say that 5 million people have lost money as a result of the social security changes that took place simultaneously, and that 2·5 million people have not benefited as a result of the combination of both.

At the same time as the Government are piloting the Bill through the House, child benefit has been frozen, housing benefit has been denied to thousands of people, prescription charges have risen, new eye test and dental check charges have been introduced and nearly 4 million people are having to pay rates for the first time, no matter how poor they are.

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury says that this is a Budget for investment, but forgets to say that, with the exception of Belgium, as a share of national income Britain invests less than any of its major competitors. Even after the last nine Budgets, as a share of our national income, in the oil-rich 1980s, we are investing less than in the 1960s or 1970s. The right hon. Gentleman tells us that this is a Budget for the meritocracy, and then gives the game away by saying that the real beneficiaries of the Budget—the top rate taxpayers—do not include teachers and junior doctors. He forgets to tell us that the financial gains for those at the very top are, in some cases, 50 to 100 times those that have accrued to engineers, research scientists and others who he says the Budget is designed to keep in this country. In the light of all that, is it any wonder that the former Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Whitelaw, has said that a little more compassion is needed from the Government?

If the Chief Secretary will not agree with any of our figures, perhaps he will agree with a Budget analysis to be produced this week, not by the Labour party or the TUC, but by Morgan Grenfell and Co. Ltd. This analysis, described in a press release this afternoon and to be published tomorrow, is entitled:

"High income earners: how they will spend their £2·8 billion tax cuts".

I hope that the Financial Secretary will get a copy of the document later this evening. Morgan Grenfell claims that the Chancellor gave misleading indicators of the real benefits to the very rich as a result of the Budget.

The document says that the rich obtained a "disproportionate share" of even the basic rate tax cuts and the personal allowance changes and concludes:

"The 1988 Budget discriminated heavily in favour of the better off ... The Budget tax cuts were virtually unprecedented in terms of size and concentration in the hands of a very small section of the population."

That appears in a document by supporters of the Conservative party.

Let me tell the House the other conclusions reached in that document. While the Chief Secretary is exhorting ordinary employees to accept about 2 per cent. as basic wage increases because of what they have been given in tax cuts, Morgan Grenfell predicts a 15 per cent. rise in basic income for those on the top tax rates. I have not heard the Chief Secretary criticise those at the very top for taking such large income rises.

The Chief Secretary says that top rate tax cuts encourage savings and investment, and thereby produce jobs, although there is not much evidence that the rate of investment in our productive industries has increased to any great degree in real terms since 1979. In answer to that, Morgan Grenfell says that 83 per cent. of top rate tax cuts will be spent rather than saved, and a smaller proportion of that will of course be invested in productive industry in Britain.

Thirdly, Morgan Grenfell tells us—this is the truth about the new Britain to which Viscount Whitelaw referred in his interview with *Woman's Own*—the real boom areas in the economy as a result of the Budget will be luxury cars, boats, domestic servants, expensive wines and foreign holidays. This boom will do much for industry abroad and increase our imports. The boom is happening at the same time as pensioners are having to make a choice between heating and eating as a result of the housing benefit cuts. It is happening at a time when mothers are having to send their children to school ill-clad and hungry as a result of the freeze in child benefit and cuts in other benefits. I believe that the electorate will remember that the biggest tax handout in history to the very rich has been accompanied by the imposition of social security legislation that encourages the transfer of the relief of the poverty trap from social security offices to charitable organisations.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not criticising those who wish to spend some of their post-tax earnings on boats. In my constituency about 150 people are employed in manufacturing power boats, not only for people in this country, but for overseas exports, which earn revenue for the Treasury and keep my constituents in jobs. The hon. Gentleman's remark was utterly disgraceful.

Mr. Brown: I hope that the next time we debate the future of the shipbuilding industry the hon. Gentleman will join us in the Lobby to defend jobs, not only in his constituency, but up and down the country, that are being lost as a result of the Government's insane shipbuilding policy.

Let me return to the question that I put to the Chief Secretary. Morgan Grenfell may be too conservative in its account of the distributionary effects of the Budget. As I said earlier, the top 1 per cent.—this was confirmed by the Financial Secretary last Tuesday afternoon—will get 31·3 per cent. of the Budget gain. The top 1 per cent. represent about 200,000 households. They are people who are already earning more than £50,000 a year. They are people who, over the past eight or nine years, have had perhaps up to £10,000 a year in tax cuts as a result of changes in the top rate of taxation. They will gain an extra £10,000 or so as a result of these Budget changes.

How do the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary justify the growing inequality—the growing gap between rich and poor—that will necessarily result from selective generosity to those who are already very rich? Last week we asked the Financial Secretary on what possible evidence he could justify such huge windfall gains by the very rich: on what evidence he based his claim that huge tax cuts to those at the very top will produce incentives and thus create opportunities for other people. The Financial Secretary said that he had such evidence and that our claim that no published evidence could justify his contention was entirely wrong.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asked the Financial Secretary on what he based his claim that there was academic evidence, the right hon. Gentleman dismissed the views of Professor Brown, a British academic who was good enough to be commissioned by the Treasury to write a report and good enough to be allowed to continue that report even though it was commissioned by a previous Government. The Financial Secretary said, instead, that Professor Lindsey had justified the top rate and other tax cuts. *[Interruption.]* Does the Financial Secretary doubt that that was what he said?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Brown: The right hon. Gentleman does not doubt it. I confess that I had not heard a great deal about Professor Lindsey, apart from a passing reference in *The Sunday Times*, and I know that most of my hon. Friends had not had a chance to study his works. Therefore, over the weekend, I took the opportunity to read all the works which the Treasury, at the invitation of the House of Commons Library, had suggested that someone interested in the career of Professor Lindsey should read. I must tell the House that it was not a long and arduous task. There is no book in America, and no book published in Britain, and there is not even an Adam Smith Institute pamphlet, to which one can look. Professor Lindsey does not even have the honour of having been asked to write a speech for Keith Joseph in the old days when all these ideas were first being advanced. The Treasury told the Library that someone interested in Professor Lindsey should read one article in the *Journal of Public Economics* written by the professor, or associate professor or, as we would call him, the lecturer.

Let me tell the House what Professor Lindsey does not claim. I suppose that the Financial Secretary will be disappointed, because he does not claim that the tax cuts are compensated for by the extra efforts of the rich. He does not necessarily believe that the rich will respond to the top rate tax cuts by working a great deal harder. Rather, he says that the rich will respond to the top rate tax cuts and other tax cuts simply by declaring a larger share of their income for tax purposes. After all, he says, the reason why the rich will be paying a higher share of taxes is that they are reporting a higher share of income. But Professor Lindsey does not expect the top rate taxes to be entirely compensated for by people declaring more of their income. He expects that the Treasury may get back a sixth to a quarter of what it has lost.

Far from there being evidence from Professor Lindsey that these top rate tax cuts make people work harder, or that the top rate tax cuts will be compensated for entirely by people declaring more income, he argues none of these things. None of the arguments that have been put forward by the Financial Secretary are sustained by the arguments of Professor Lindsey. None of the arguments put forward this afternoon by the Chief Secretary are sustained by this academic, for I shall read the conclusion of Professor Lindsey's article. He says:

"These findings do not support the contention that tax cuts by themselves produce any great surge in economic performance."

Is it not the height of fiscal irresponsibility for the Government to tell us that we should vote tonight for £2 billion in top rate tax cuts to go to the very rich on the basis of an unproven and unprovable theory, an untested and presumably untestable contention, from a relatively unknown academic writing in a relatively unknown journal about tax policy in another country, and to tell us that we should prefer to vote for these tax cuts in preference to the secure and unmistakable, the precise and quantifiable benefits of investing the same amount of money in the National Health Service? With advisers like him in America, I can well understand why President Reagan has said that he listens to astrologers in preference to economists.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that the use by Treasury Ministers of some academic either here or abroad is not relevant, and that the Government are determined to reward the rich, as all Tory Governments have done, perhaps even more than this one? They need no excuse, as they are dedicated to the rich; hence these tax cuts, which have benefited very few people.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out, but I know he will understand why I want to take the Government through their own evidence. If they want to justify to the public the reasons why they are introducing the top rate tax cut, we should expect them to produce evidence by which they might be able to stand. The truth is that they have produced one name, in Professor Lindsey, whose work does not stand the test of time and who does not himself expect his work to be used in this way. They cannot justify the tax cut on the basis of the evidence that they put forward.

If the Germans work harder and pay less tax, and if the Japanese pay even less tax and work even harder, what is so peculiar about Britain if nothing but yet more tax cuts will increase the productivity of the 5 per cent. who are at the very top? Were they not working before 1979? Were they not working hard enough between 1979 and 1988 and therefore need these tax cuts? If that is the case, what possible justification can there be for the House to vote tax cuts to them this evening in the belief that more tax cuts will increase their efficiency? Is not the truth of all this that the Government do not believe that these top rate tax cuts will make people more productive, efficient and responsive to change? All they know is that these tax cuts will make people richer, and that is why they are doing it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will my right hon. Friend not accept that this document, and indeed the Lindsey material, if it can be called that, should become centre stage during the Committee proceedings? It is for Ministers to read this document. Indeed, I am sure that we can table an amendment on which to peg a debate on these matters. The Minister cannot just sit quietly by the Dispatch Box, not responding. The evidence needs a reply and Ministers should make public statements. The whole of the Budget statement was based on the proposition that this material is rubbish and that they are correct.

Mr. Brown: I take it that my hon. Friend is suggesting that the Chief Secretary spends less time reading *Woman's Own* and more time reading some of the academic works that have been produced.

Mr. Major: If I were to do that I would miss some extremely interesting interviews in *Woman's Own*.

Mr. Brown: I was preparing for a major intervention from the Minister that would cut right across our argument. All he is confirming, however, is that he likes reading *Woman's Own*. Perhaps in the light of what he said he might do better to spend his time reading *Woman's Own* than trying to get through some of the major articles which the Financial Secretary, in his rush to the top, is obviously busily reading.

5.30 pm

No one on this side of the House, looking at what is happening up and down the country, believes that tax cuts should take priority over the proper funding of the National Health Service and our public services. Last month we welcomed, as did everybody, the pay awards for nurses and doctors. Like the Select Committee on Social Services, which has a Conservative majority and which published its report only a few weeks ago, we recognise

[Mr. Brown]

that the award to the doctors and nurses was the beginning, rather than the end, of attempts to solve the funding problems of the National Health Service.

Let me repeat what the Committee recommended. It did not suggest that the battle for funding would be resolved by the payment of the award only to nurses and doctors. It said that the Government ought to guarantee to fund fully the pay awards under the Whitley committee for the other 500,000 people working in the NHS, which should be an additional amount of money provided by the Government. The Committee said also that there must be 2 per cent. growth in real terms over the coming year to account for technological and demographic changes. It said that the refund of £95 million from the pay awards that were under-funded last year ought to be met by the Government, and it reported that the DHSS had acknowledged that that was an under-funding.

The Committee went on to say that a programme of £1 billion for repair and renovation, as well as current expenditure to make up the shortfall that the Committee itself had identified as £1·8 billion, should be begun immediately under new funding arrangements by the Government. Nothing has changed with the agreement to the pay awards for nurses and doctors. The priority of the British population is that the Health Service should be properly funded in the way that the Select Committee described before we vote tax cuts this evening.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why the Government have been able to put more money into the National Health Service, including fully funding the nurses' pay award last week, when we have been cutting taxes, while under his last Labour Government they were increasing taxes, yet nurses' pay fell in real terms? Given that many of the nurses whose pay will increase because of the announcement will benefit from the tax cuts proposed under these clauses, does the hon. Gentleman propose to increase those taxes for the self-same nurses if he is in power?

Mr. Brown: The Government have increased taxes, as the hon. Gentleman should be aware, for the average person, who pays a higher share of his income in tax, as well as having increased the total revenue from tax. The hon. Gentleman must be one of the few people in the House who believe that the Health Service is adequately funded. I do not expect that even the Prime Minister, who has had to set up a review on the Health Service, believes that the Health Service is adequately funded.

When we compare our funding to the position in other countries, it is evident that, whereas we spend less than 6 per cent. of GDP on our Health Service, other countries spend far more. The Italians spend 7 per cent., the Germans 8 per cent., the French 8 per cent. and the Americans 10 per cent. of their GDP. That is exactly why the Select Committee on Social Services is determined that the Health Service has proper funding.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am listening to the hon. Gentleman with interest. As he reads so widely, he should be aware that the Kings Fund and other organisations are aware of considerable anxieties, particularly in Germany, that the German health service has a level of funding leading to demands that nobody in the health service welcomes simply because they are regarded as unnecessary. This difficulty must be taken into consideration.

Mr. Brown: I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware that many French hospitals are not fully filled at the moment. There are different demands in different places. In Britain we are not meeting the existing demand. There are more than 700,000 people on waiting lists, many waiting for urgently needed operations. At the same time, as admitted by the DHSS, a programme of at least £1·7 billion is needed to fund the renovation and repair that is required to bring our hospitals up to a satisfactory state. That is exactly why we believe that the first priority of any Government should be to bring the Health Service to its proper state of funding.

A constituent came to see me in my surgery at the weekend. He told me that his mother had just died and that his father had to care for his grandfather, who was more than 90 years of age, severely disabled and unable to move out of his home. The father was waiting to go into hospital for a coronary operation and he could not cope with the grandfather. In Fife, however, there has been an inadequate expansion of care for the elderly. As a result, my constituent has had to use his money to put his grandfather into a private nursing home at a cost of £240 a week—much of which he has had to pay himself. My constituent told me that as a result of the tax cut that he has received from the Budget, and as a result of the under-funding of the Health Service, he has had to pay out more in a week than he will receive in tax cuts in a year.

People up and down the country are asking what is the gain of tax cuts to them when they are on waiting lists, when they have to travel further to visit people in hospital because the cottage hospitals have been closed, and when they cannot get non-urgent operations done because of growing waiting lists. Their greatest fear is that as a result of the tax cuts and the review with which the Prime Minister is involved, they will have to pay a far greater share of their income towards health care.

In case Conservative Members believe that the argument that we advanced before the Budget has disappeared, let me remind them that health authorities and health boards are still having to make difficult decisions—even after taking into account the health salary changes that were announced by the Prime Minister a few weeks ago. Lambeth health authority, for example, is having to make difficult decisions about whether to continue with the closure of a 137-bed hospital, to close out-patients' services for one week in every four and, because of a continuing shortfall in its budget, to consider further the possibility of closing the children's psychiatric hospital. Such are the difficult decisions that health authorities must make. I make no apology for saying that, when the choice is between tax cuts and a properly funded NHS, we shall vote for its proper funding and I believe that the country will be on our side.

The Government faced a number of choices about priorities in the Budget. The Chancellor had to make a choice about how to use £800 million. He had to decide whether that money should go in tax cuts to those with incomes of more than £100,000 a year or be used to avoid restrictions on housing and child benefits. The Chancellor showed us where his true priorities lie. He chose to give a great deal more to those who already have large sums of money. The cost of that decision was that housing and

child benefits were cut. The Chancellor had a choice of properly funding the NHS and our deteriorating social services, or cutting taxes. He was aware of public opinion —not just doctors' and nurses' opinion—about that, but in preference he chose the path of tax cuts.

No Budget in this century—I suspect at any time—has given more money to the rich in our community. No Budget has seen such a large redistribution of income from the poor to the rich as this Finance Bill, and especially clause 23.

The people of this country are far more altruistic and far less selfish than the Government who rule over them. They are looking for a Government who will stand up for the whole nation, not just part of it. They are looking for a Government who will legislate in the interests of the whole community, not just some of it. They are looking for a Government who will give priority in all their policies to the interests of all sections of society, not just the richest few.

5.45 pm

When the people make their choice on Thursday—it will be the first vote on the Budget—I believe that they will have no doubt about rejecting the policies that have been put forward by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. The Government's response to the growing gap between the rich and the poor in our society has been to widen that gap deliberately and then to deny that any Government can do anything about it. It is for that reason that we shall vote against the clauses this evening. It is for that reason that we shall have the whole country behind us.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Nine years ago today the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) was the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Nine years ago tomorrow he was not. I believe that it was ungracious of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary not to pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman who served as a Treasury Minister for almost all of the period of office of the previous Labour Government. When the right hon. Gentleman left office the highest rate of tax on income was 98 per cent. and the basic rate of tax was 33 per cent.

After the last general election a rather disgraceful scene took place when the Labour party said that it was to abandon all its beliefs because it needed to decide wherein would lie the greatest prospect of securing the endorsement and popularity of the British people. It is a profound error for a political party to say that it will simply go to the country with that programme that it believes will be the most popular. During the course of this Parliament the Labour party will find that to build the policies of a great party simply upon those it perceives will be the most popular with the electorate rather than upon principles or convictions is a subterfuge and unworthy of a great party.

I have had an opportunity to refresh my memory of the manifesto upon which the Labour party fought the last election. The concluding paragraph was headed:

"Britain will win with Labour".

It reads:

"Labour's plans, carefully costed, prudently programmed, can provide that start".

Of course there is the closest link between the proposals in clauses 22 and 23—as the hon Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has made clear—and the programme of public expenditure. What has happened in the past nine years and what has happened as a result of the Budget —the ninth successive Budget to be presented by a Conservative Chancellor—is that there has been an increase in public expenditure. We are now to have—quite rightly—a programme to reduce taxation.

Labour Members are right to point out—as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary acknowledged—that taxation takes a higher proportion of GDP today than it did in 1979. The paradox with which the Labour party is faced and the dilemma that it has been unable to solve is whether it is now in favour of the policies for reducing taxation or is opposed to them. It is legitimate for any Socialist party—it has been the characteristic of Socialist parties throughout the ages—to say that it is in favour of higher taxation. The Opposition have the difficulty—no answer was given by the shadow Chief Secretary to the question put by my right hon. Friend—of deciding——

Mr. Morgan: Will the hon. Gentleman stop waggling his finger at us?

Mr. Gow: It is my finger and I shall waggle it at the Opposition if I want to.

The Opposition will have to decide what to say to the British people at the next election about whether they will diminish or increase the standard rate of income tax. They have not answered that question and will find it difficult to do so. If they have now abandoned all principles and convictions and have decided to go to the country with the programme that they believe will be the most popular, they had better understand that a policy of lower taxation on income is becoming increasingly popular with the British people.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the hon. Gentleman's party in favour of reducing taxation or merely of redistributing it from direct to indirect taxes?

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear in his Budget speech that he had set for our Government a target of a basic rate of 20p as soon as it was prudent to reduce income tax to that level. With that commitment, I find myself in wholehearted and enthusiastic agreement. My right hon. Friend made no commitment to reducing the higher rate of tax to below 40 per cent. I hope that we shall be able to move to a basic rate of tax of 20p in the pound. I have clearly said that I am in favour of lower taxation——

Ms. Armstrong: I asked the hon. Gentleman whether he was in favour of reducing taxation overall or merely of redistributing it from direct to indirect tax.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Lady will find that, as the years proceed, the proportion of GDP taken by tax under this Government will diminish.

Mr. John Smith: But it has gone up.

Mr. Gow: I have acknowledged that the share of GDP taken by taxation was higher than it was in 1979 and I praised the Government because we are now reducing that proportion and will go on reducing it throughout the remainder of this Parliament.

The Opposition face a dilemma and will face it in the Division Lobby tonight. They do not know whether to vote in favour of the reduction in the basic rate, whether to abstain, or whether to support it. That has been made clear. The lesson that will be drawn by the British people

[Mr. Gow]

when they read their newspapers tomorrow morning will be that the Opposition's vote has shown once again that they are not in favour of reducing the basic rate of tax.

It was entirely prudent of the Chancellor to have reduced the basic rate in the Budget, because, accompanying that reduction in income tax, has gone, for the first time since the Budget introduced by the noble Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, a budgeting for a repayment of debt.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): As every opinion poll has shown that the vast majority of the British population would rather have more money spent on social services—particularly the Health Service—than on a cut in the basic rate of income tax, from where does the hon. Gentleman draw the evidence to substantiate his claim that the British people prefer a cut in the basic rate of tax? Was it a straw poll among his friends at the yacht club?

Mr. Gow: I call in aid May 1979, June 1983 and June 1987, when the alternatives were precisely laid before the British people. Indeed, if the hon. Gentleman recalls it, his party committed itself in June last year to reversing the reduction from 27p in the pound to 25p. That was in the manifesto, and that policy of increasing the basic rate of income tax was decisively rejected by the British people on 11 June last year. That was an actual poll, not an opinion poll. The Opposition's position on taxes was perfectly clear to the British people in May 1979, June 1983 and June 1987.

I happen to believe that there is a coincidence between the principles and commitment of the Conservative party and the wish of the British people. If the Opposition want to go into the next election as the party of a higher basic rate of income tax, we shall be happy to accept that challenge from them.

I said that I thought the reductions in income tax were prudent because they were accompanied by a proposal to repay £3 billion worth of debt. It would come as no surprise to me if the repayment of debt in this financial year exceeded £3 billion. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is a cautious man; he predicted in the past financial year that there would be an increase in borrowing —there was not. Even in the past financial year, there was repayment of debt, and I believe there will be a greater repayment than the £3 billion that my right hon. Friend has forecast in this financial year.

Reductions in income tax in the past nine years have been accompanied by an increase in the gross domestic product—the wealth created by the nation. It is possible for the Opposition to advocate a policy of higher taxation on incomes, but that would be accompanied by a reduction in the rate at which the economy grew. That is why it was right for my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to point out that reductions in income tax have been accompanied by higher and unprecedented spending on social security, notably the Health Service. It is a continuing irony that Opposition Members, who constantly claim to be the compassionate and caring party, presided, when in office, over a Health Service in which there were 65,000 fewer nurses than there are under the flint-faced regime of my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. There is an extraordinary paradox in this: the Opposition preach the need to show greater compassion, but when they are in office they cannot deliver that compassion because they cannot run the economy in a way that creates wealth.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman admit that if the Government double unemployment and triple the number of people who depend on state benefits, more will of course be spent—more than by the last Labour Government or any Government in history? That is the result of a dreadful economic and social policy, not a successful one.

Mr. Gow: That certainly cannot be said of the Health Service on which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are spending more than a third more in real terms than did the "caring" Government, when they were in power. The Labour party cannot have been particularly successful in the recruitment and payment of nurses if 65,000 more of them work for the National Health Service now than when the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was in the Cabinet. Why did he tolerate a regime in which there were 65,000 fewer nurses than now?

The proposals in clauses 22 and 23 mark a great philosophical change from the levels of taxation that we had when the Opposition were in power, and, as my right hon. Friend pointed out, from the taxation we have had since the war.

We have been obsessed by egalitarian rates of taxation. We have failed to take account of the move all over the world towards lower rates of tax on income. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has been able to confirm that the highest rates of tax on income in the Soviet Union is 41 per cent., 1 per cent. higher than that proposed in clause 23. The Labour party would do well to examine those economies which have been the most successful. Those are the economies which have had the lowest rates of income tax.

I shall vote enthusiastically for clauses 22 and 23 and I shall note with increasing bewilderment how the Labour party is able to resolve its own essential dilemma as to how to present to the British people the case for higher rates of income tax. That is what the Labour party will be doing tonight.

6 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon: My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) put the right question to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) when she pointed out that direct taxation may well come down, but indirect taxation may well go up. I want to refer later to the proportion of those two forms of taxation.

I wish to deal first with the matter raised by Professor Brown and his attitude survey, which was a very interesting and useful survey. I am always a little unsure about how much weight to attach to attitude surveys. It makes it easier for me to be unsure because I can quote a number of examples that tell us exactly what happened about certain matters in the past. In 1962, when the levels of surtax were lowered, it was held that that would be the great incentive that would release the energies of people at the highest levels of taxation, but nothing happened. There was a collapse, an overseas disaster and the stop-go cycle was resumed a couple of years later.

The same claim was made in 1972 when Lord Barber introduced the unified tax system. He claimed that that

would produce great incentives for the wealth creators of our country, the great industrialists and entrepreneurs, but disaster came a couple of years later.

I accept the normal Conservative argument in this matter. Let us abandon theory for the time being and consider what happens in practice. Little case can be made out for improving incentives, leading to an improvement in the economy. I am sceptical about these matters. We must remain sceptical and hope that the Treasury does not make too much use of these incentive arguments in the future.

The compression of the rates of tax represents a staggering change between this Government and all previous Conservative Governments. The lowest level is 25 per cent., plus 9 per cent. national insurance contribution, making 34 per cent., while miles away, at the other end of the scale, the wealthiest people pay 40 per cent. That was not always so.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury answered with great courtesy the questions put to him, which the House appreciates, but I was staggered that he did not understand that the long gradation, enjoyed by so many other countries, is to be admired. Other countries say that that is the way a tax system should operate—the more one receives, the higher band one moves up to. That is how such matters should be run, but it was not done, simply for reasons of administrative simplicity. Computerisation will make some things more easily possible which were not so easily possible in the past.

At the same time, child benefit is not being increased in line with inflation. In undertaking such matters, the House is essentially reversing what used to be regarded as fair taxation. About 10 years ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced his notion of truth in taxation, according to which we had to index taxation automatically, by statute, to ensure that people were paying income tax, not on the basis of inflation, but on the basis of the retail prices index, as a fair test of indexation. That was called the Rooker-Wise amendment. The Chancellor of the Exchequer added his name to it, although the Conservative party was strongly against it. There were fierce battles about that in Committee. That was truth in taxation.

We now have what I call unfair taxation. There is only one candidate for that—the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This clause will be known as the Lawson clause. We must ask ourselves why all previous Governments believed in progressive taxation, yet this Government do not. It was not because they were not Conservative Governments. We are going back a century to the time of Gladstone. All those Governments—Right wing, Left wing, Liberal, Labour and Conservative—believed in progressive taxation until this Government came along and said, "No, that's a load of old nonsense. We really want a flat rate. Even 34 per cent. to 40 per cent. may be too wide a band."

I seemed to catch a hint of that from the hon. Member for Eastbourne, although perhaps I was wrong. He appeared to suggest that 34 per cent. to 40 per cent. was a little too wide and might be compressed at some stage. Clearly that is a fundamental change, and that is why many hon. Members want to speak in the debate.

Mr. Gow: As I have already said that I approve of 40 per cent. for the highest rate, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will tell the Committee what he thinks should be the top rate of tax.

Mr. Sheldon: I believe that the top rate of tax should be substantially above 40 per cent. The precise levels and graduations would have to be worked out, but I am in favour of a progressive system.

Let us consider the rates of taxation when Alec Douglas-Home was Prime Minister. According to a report of the commissioners of Her Majesty's Inland Revenue, until 1963 the standard rate was 38·75 per cent.—7s 9d in the pound—but there was earned income relief. If one earned one's money rather than received it in dividends, one received relief and that made the rate about 30·13 per cent. However, below that there were three reduced rate bands. The first £60 was taxed at 8·75 per cent. After earned income relief, that gave a figure of 6·8 per cent. which was the first level of tax. The second rate was 16·52 per cent., the third 24·3 per cent. and the full rate was 30·13 per cent.

The levels of surtax went up from 38·75 per cent. to 48·75 per cent., to 51·25 per cent., to 56·25 per cent., to 61·25 per cent., to 66·25 per cent., to 71·25 per cent., to 76·25 per cent., to 81·25 per cent., to 86·25 per cent., to a top rate of 88·75 per cent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What was the number of people unemployed?

Mr. Sheldon: There were fewer than half a million people unemployed.

That was a Conservative Government who believed in three reduced rates, standard rates and 11 levels of surtax. Every other Government believed in that. However, there were different approaches. A Conservative Government worked on the basis that the broadest backs should carry the greatest burdens. That respectable view was held by Conservative and Liberal Governments. The Labour party believed in that as an engine for redistribution. We called it redistribution for greatest equality. The Conservatives called it the greatest burdens borne by the strongest backs. However, it had essentially the same theme. The progressive system of taxation existed for 100 years. We called it different things, but it had certain aspects in common. It was valuable because it had so much in common.

Of course the rates would be different. We had different views about how the money should be raised and spent. There must always be a divide between the two sides of the Committee on those matters. However, on the simple question of how people should be responsible for financing the operations of the Government, there was general agreement in the broadest sense.

We also had child tax allowance and child benefit. During the term of the Labour Government about 10 years ago—the hon. Member for Eastbourne has drawn attention to some of the things that happened during that time—we brought in child benefit. Until then there was the child tax allowance. According to the Rooker-Wise theory, to which was added subsequently the name Lawson, that allowance was to be increased with inflation. We said that to give tax allowances to those who paid no tax was nonsense and that it should be a benefit, and if we regarded it as such the problem was that it would count for public expenditure. That was serious because public expenditure, through the arcane way in which we operate these things, is treated differently from income. Negative expenditure and positive expenditure might be nonsense, but we understood the way in which they operated.

[Mr. Sheldon]

Iain Macleod agreed with us on behalf of the Conservative Opposition at the time that child allowance should not count for public expenditure because it was directly related to the income tax allowances that existed before. We agreed that it should be treated in the same way. That firm undertaking was given and I witnessed it in the House. The great tragedy is that that co-operation was withdrawn and child benefit is now fixed and not increased as it should be.

The whole point about child allowances and taxation in general is that the schemes were originally devised for the middle classes. That is why we have a married allowance. We needed that allowance because the middle-class wife did not work. Before the war, when a couple married, the wife lost her job in the bank or Civil Service. That was an automatic consequence of marriage. The burden fell on the husband and he needed an allowance to help him. Therefore, the married allowance was born.

The position is different today because as a rule the wife works. Although two may not live as cheaply as one, they normally manage to get by on a little less than twice their combined income. However, the greatest problem lies with the child allowance. When family benefit was first introduced it was held that it should not be given for the first child. It was believed that the first child would not cost very much on the basis that the middle-class mother did not work. As she was not working, the first child did not cost much. However, for a working mother a child represents a staggering drop in income as it stops her working.

Subsequently we have been coming to grips with those problems. They should have been dealt with through an increase in child benefit as a direct consequence of the change from tax allowances.

As I have said, there were three reduced rates and 11 higher rates. In the 1963 Budget the three reduced rates were reduced to two. In the 1969 Budget they were reduced to one reduced rate and in 1970 the reduced rate disappeared. The surtax levels remained the same and were incorporated in the new system of taxation introduced by Anthony Barber. We understood the reasons for getting rid of the reduced rates. They involved problems with the Inland Revenue and the complications in its having to deal with fairly small sums for large numbers of people as they entered the tax net.

All those issues can be opened up afresh with computerisation. I should have liked the Chancellor to say that he agrees with the whole system of progressive taxation and understands some of the difficulties, but that these matters might be reconsidered when computerisation is completed next year. It is my great hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will be able to introduce those changes which will restore the fair tax system that existed for the past 100 years.

6.15 pm

Under Alec Douglas-Home there was a tax range from 6 per cent. to just under 90 per cent. I keep hearing people refer to the 98 per cent. level that was introduced for a few years. That must be compared with the whole panoply of history in which we charged what we thought to be reasonable burdens on those backs that could readily bear them. We need that kind of approach to be restored, but perhaps not precisely in those terms.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I have listened very carefully to the right hon. Gentleman. With regard to having a completely progressive system such as that which existed in 1963, is not the flaw in the argument that today we see an increase in the income tax revenue to the Treasury over and above the revenues brought in by the progressive taxation of the past? Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that if we reintroduce that progressive level the tax take will decrease proportionally and therefore money will not be available to be directed to those groups whom the right hon. Gentleman rightly stated need that money and should be helped to provide the necessary services in health, welfare and education?

Mr. Sheldon: I should be astonished if that was so. The precise levels of tax and the bands would have to be examined completely afresh, as I am sure that they will be. However, those points can be dealt with readily.

The important point about the reason for the high tax take is that so many people at the top are voting themselves mega-pound salaries. That used not to happen in this country. People, in my view rightly—perhaps wrongly in the view of some Conservative Members—believed that it was right to have great wealth without due cause or need. Of course, the need was for investment. Great wealth simply for display or consumption was not so prominent in this country as it is now. It existed elsewhere, but not here. That has changed now. I think that that is a pity, but others may draw their own conclusions.

In 1973 Anthony Barber introduced the investment income surcharge, the unified tax. He still regarded it as right that those people who received unearned income should pay taxes at a different level from those who worked. That was right. There must always be a difference between those who earn their living, whatever that may be, at whatever level, and those who receive dividends. That is not a punishment. They are more capable of bearing that burden.

In 1859 Gladstone—I am sorry to refer to this, but it is important because certain things remain important throughout history and this is one of them—called income tax an engine of gigantic power. He had great hopes of bringing about the situation that has existed over the past 100 years which, to a great extent, has been brought to a halt by this Government.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The right hon. Gentleman refers frequently to Gladstone. Will he remind the Committee of the top rate of tax during Gladstone's time? May I also ask the right hon. Gentleman why he prefers child benefit to family credit? As child benefit is paid tax free, it is the best benefit that any rich taxpayer could possibly have.

Mr. Sheldon: We had these arguments at the time when child benefit was introduced. It was accepted on both sides of the House that the change could be made and would be made to the benefit of mothers. There were great difficulties at the time, but they were overcome.

Gladstone did not introduce income tax. It began long before his time. However, he did introduce reduced rates

of tax, which was important. He began the long process of spreading the burden of taxation according to people's ability to pay.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that Gladstone fought the 1874 general election on the basis that he had reduced income tax rates and would eliminate income tax altogether? The whole basis of Gladstone's economic policy was to transfer completely from direct taxation to indirect taxation.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that all that was long before the state took over so many of the functions that it subsequently did, in both the first world war and the second world war. Therefore, it is not possible to make any useful comparisons in that respect. Where one can make comparisons to some advantage is when assessing which people bear the burden of taxation of all kinds. Income tax took its place as the great engine of gigantic power, and we can compare that with the situation in 1988.

We have seen a difference in the proportions of taxation. It is expected that taxation will raise £40 billion in 1987-88. VAT will raise £23 billion, and petrol duty will raise £7·8 billion. There are then the other indirect taxes. The whole balance of taxation is changing under the present Government. The importance of that is that it becomes possible to reduce rates of income tax while retaining a great deal of unfairness—quite apart from the distribution of that taxation—because indirect taxes are not as progressive as direct taxes can be, if properly employed.

Gladstone said also that income tax was inequitable because its demands pressed too hard upon intelligence and skill and not hard enough on property. That criticism remains valid today. Indeed, it is more valid because investment income surcharge has been removed. That surcharge was a result of property ownership, and one paid it on the basis of the dividends received from one's investment. It was in effect a tax on that property. The removal of that charge is a further consequence of the changes made by the present Government.

After more than a century, equitable taxation is facing its most serious setback. We are reversing a century of fair taxation. We need a Government who will consider taxation matters again and try to restore some of the notions of equitable taxation which we have long taken for granted but which are being seriously damaged by this Government.

Mr. Ian Taylor: It was interesting earlier, when the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was on his feet, that he failed to answer my intervention. I asked him what his taxation policy would be, given that he seemed to oppose our own. I asked him in particular about the nurses, who have benefited from the ability of the Government to fund their award in full. The hon. Gentleman failed to answer that question and went off into the realms of global financial policy.

The trouble is that the Labour party does not have a policy on taxation, other than to make it penal. There is no level of taxation that the Labour party would accept other than one so high that it would destroy initiative and penalise all those who tried to work and put effort into the economy. It was the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who, not that long ago, made the infamous remark that he wished top taxpayers could be squeezed until the pips squeaked. He did not succeed in convincing the electorate that that was a good thing, and Labour consequently lost the election.

Even at the last general election we found that the Labour party had not worked out who were the top taxpayers. Were they the people earning £100,000 a year, or £50,000 a year? Or were they people earning £15,000 a year who—as was inadvertently admitted in one programme by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—were the top taxpayers whose pips should be squeaked? That is a savage indictment against Labour, in respect of the average working person in this country, with expectations about the kind of wage to which he could aspire—which is by no means the kind of wage which he would consider would put him in the top tax bracket. Is it suggested that these people should now be squeezed until their pips squeak, along with the other supposed multi-millionaires whom the Labour party has traditionally opposed?

The reality is that, under a Labour Government, rates of tax were so high that the biggest industry they ever produced was that of tax dodging. One Opposition Member mentioned that one of the benefits of the Government's proposals to reduce the top rate of tax was that more declarations would be made. To that I said, "Hear, hear." I have no doubt that if we can destroy the tax dodge industry, we shall release a great deal more energy into the economy, as well as more revenue into the Exchequer.

The question that the Labour party has to answer is: how can this Government cut income tax progressively—to 25 per cent. as it is now proposed—while at the same time increase year in, year on, the amount of money dedicated to the National Health Service? How can the Government cut rates of tax and at the same time ensure that the top taxpayers are contributing—if one takes the top 5 per cent.—a greater amount; up from 24 per cent. in 1978-79 to 28·5 per cent. in 1987-88? The reality is that in the Budget the Government have achieved a number of remarkable things while at the same time reducing rates of taxation.

The Government have been able to afford to take 750,000 people out of taxation altogether, by doubling indexation. They have repaid public debt, so that we now have a public sector surplus. The Government have enabled people who particularly want to provide for individual charities or health charities the ability substantially to do so through the payroll giving relief of £240 per annum—a remarkable and well-targeted measure allowing taxpayers to give to those causes which they consider most needful. At the same time, the Government have increased National Health Service spending.

The last Labour Government apparently believed that higher taxes assisted the Exchequer in social policy, but they ended by cutting the real rates of pay to nurses and by cutting back the hospital building programme by 30 per cent. The argument made by the Opposition should be covered by ignominy when one compares their record and taxation policy against ours.

Mr. Morgan: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that between 1974 and 1979 the Western world was hit by the shock effect of the OPEC price rises of July 1973? All countries in the West suffered a massive transfer of income

[Mr. Morgan]

from consumer pockets and from the taxable capacity of those consumers to the OPEC countries. Does the hon. Gentleman recall that event?

6.30 pm

Mr. Taylor: Of course I recall that event. Opposition Members, when they are under pressure, immediately try to call the oil crisis to their aid, but that is no longer a possible excuse. There is a clear decline in the economy's dependence on oil, and at the same time the rate of growth in the economy as a whole is increasing. This year, it is the oil sector that is holding back the economy, because the non-oil sector is growing faster than the oil sector.

Tax revenues do not respond to higher tax rates. I am surprised at what has been said, because a spokesman for the Labour party conceded this fact. He has not had the courage to go as far as we have, but I read clearly the other day that, when asked what he would do about top rates of tax, he said that they would probably have to go down to about 50 per cent. That is interesting. I will willingly give way to any Opposition Member who thinks that my information is wrong, or that the Labour party does not actually believe that rates should be reduced. But Labour Members are disguising the fact that, on the one hand, most of them do not know what they mean, and, on the other hand, they are effectively saying that the concept of reducing top rates of tax is becoming attractive. It is becoming attractive regardless of the academic evidence that they purport to put forward, because there is a consistent trend in the 1980s for tax revenues to the Exchequer to increase when tax incentives are given by reducing marginal rates.

I ask Opposition Members this question—perhaps the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will consider it. If, as we posit and believe, tax revenues to the Exchequer increase as a result of the reduction in the top tax rates, has not what we are doing this year become politically irreversible? In the unlikely event that the Labour party were ever in power again, he would find that he was not able to increase top marginal rates of tax, because by that very act he would be reducing revenues to the Exchequer and thereby would be unable to spend more money on the social services.

Mr. John Smith: As the hon. Gentleman has invited me to contribute, I shall do so. Only a fool would believe the propaganda that if the rate of taxation is reduced the amount of revenue is increased. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the Red Book, he will find that the cost of the reduction in the higher rates is calculated at over £2 billion. If there is anything in his argument, why does he not also argue that the rate should come down from 40 per cent. to 35 per cent.? Presumably, even more money would come in then.

Mr. Taylor: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may well anticipate a further reduction, and I would not be embarrassed by that. I am a realistic and modest man. I should like to see the figures prove my argument this year, and by the time of next year's Budget we can have another look at the position. *[Interruption.]* Whereas Opposition Members have absolutely no concept of what risk they are prepared to take on tax rates, I have made my position clear. I will accept the wisdom of the Chancellor in bringing the rate down to 40 per cent. this year, but I see no reason why it should not come down further next year.

If the argument is proved, it will be found that it is politically irreversible. No succeeding Government could increase taxes knowing that they would thereby over a period reduce revenues to the Exchequer. That shows the shift of public opinion in its reaction to tax cuts, and it will be proven over the years to come. It will ensure a continued period of opposition for Labour Members, because they have simply not understood that in the 1980s the fundamentals have changed and the Government can now increase public expenditure without necessarily increasing tax rates. Because they cannot understand that that they also do not understand why the present Government have increased the number of risk-takers who are prepared to invest in the country. Under the Conservative Government, 9 million shareholders have come forward—about the same number as are currently registered as members of the TUC. The other risk-taking schemes have also been very successful. People realise that the risk:reward ratio of such invesments has improved, because the Government will take less of the reward if they are successful.

This is also effective internationally. I should have thought that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East would be extremely pleased with the information provided by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury recently that inward investment in Scotland last year was £2·6 billion—a record. Last year, the figure for the United Kingdom as a whole was over £6 billion. That shows that other countries, and other companies in them, find this country an attractive place. Why? Because they believe at last that the British Government are prepared to provide an internationally attractive incentive, and not only for companies. We are not discussing the corporation tax rates, which have been improved; we are merely discussing income tax. They know that if workers are paid good wages and their tax rates are attractive internationally, that is a good foundation on which to base not only the company but the home market, because of the growth of the economy and the ability of people to purchase.

Dr. Reid: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the basis of his argument is entirely falacious, and flies in the face of all empirical evidence? The report that was mentioned earlier, carried out with Professor Chuck Brown at Stirling university—the biggest empirical study of the relationship between tax rates and work incentives —has shown that there is no such relationship as the Government posit. I discussed the matter at some length with Professor Brown.

It is no good Ministers telling us that the conclusions of a massive empirical report can be negated because it was commissioned under a Labour Government. First, that suggests that Chuck Brown and his academic staff were playing the tune of the paymaster. That is a terrible slur on an esteemed academic. Secondly, it is disingenuous of Ministers to refer to the report as having been commissioned by a Labour Government, for two reasons. For one thing, although it was commissioned in 1978, it was not started until September 1979, three or four months after a Conservative Government——

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. Patrick Cormack): Order. This is rather a long intervention.

Dr. Reid: I think that it is also an important one, Mr. Cormack, as a Minister brought it up. But I shall be brief.

The report was commissioned under a Labour Government, but it was put into practice and ratified under a Conservative Government. Moreover, the initial study from 1978 was for three years, and twice the Conservative Government——

The Temporary Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman really is testing the patience of the Chair. He must resume his seat.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to you, Mr. Cormack, although I did not really need protecting. When I hear an intervention as long as that, including several uses of the word "empirical", I begin to wonder whether it should be taken seriously.

This is the importance of being a politician. We are not hiding behind great academic tomes commissioned under a Labour Government, and, from that viewpoint, we are not making the same calculations about the productiveness of the growth in the economy. As a politician, I say that I am prepared to be judged on the results this year. We have reduced the highest rate of taxation to 40 per cent., and all the calculations that I have seen, all my own beliefs and all the experience in America, suggest that we are now likely to find that, for a variety of reasons, revenues to the Exchequer will not decline. Indeed, they are likely to increase. That is a statement of belief, based on my considerations, and I find it a good deal more convincing —certainly as a mast from which I am prepared to fly my flag—than a dry academic tome commissioned some years ago. That seems a reasonably argued proposition.

I believe that when we see the results in public documents in a year's time, we will see quite clearly that the Labour party will be in a desperate fix. If it continues to do what it is doing tonight, voting against these tax reductions, effectively it will be showing that if it reverses that policy it will be decreasing the amount of money available to the Exchequer for social policies.

I conclude on the point on which I began. It seems incredible that Opposition Members claim to be concerned about average wage earners, yet threaten those average wage earners—which include the nurses—with a tax increase. What rate are they proposing? We are reducing taxation from 27 per cent. to 25 per cent. What rate are the Opposition proposing? I should like Opposition Members to address themselves to that question during the course of the debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Government's case is based on the proposition that the policy that they are pursuing is one of reducing taxation. I submit to the Committee that that policy is an illusion, that the Government are raising money in the same volume that was raised in 1979 and that the public is being duped.

The strategy has been simply to switch from direct to indirect taxation, and, more interestingly, to place a form of taxation on the goods and services provided by the state. I submit that the boom in consumption that has taken place during that same period has little to do with illusory tax cuts and far more to do with the expansion of personal credit.

Are the tax cuts an illusion? The tax cuts have meant a reduction from 33p in the pound to 25p in the pound, but at the same time, as we all know, there has been an increase in the burden of taxation for a married couple with two children from 35 per cent. to 37·48 per cent.

If we examine where the increases are to be found, we find the infamous doubling of VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent., which, in effect, was an across-the-board increase on most consumption in this country. There are other forms of indirect taxation of a special nature that are Government-induced. Rates have increased by 164 per cent. since 1979, compared with an 87 per cent. increase in the RPI. In the same period the average unrebated rate per hereditament in this country has gone up from £131 to £467—an increase of 256 per cent. Clearly that is just a switch from one tax to another tax—a tax through local government.

There has been an increase in the cost of mortgages. Mortgages have gone up 167 per cent. during that period against an RPI increase of 87 per cent. Some might say that that was a Government-induced increase in the cost of living, and in effect it was a form of tax. There have been increases in rents of council housing and in the private sector of 165 per cent. Telephone charges have increased by 111 per cent. The price of alcoholic drink has increased by 106 per cent. I am not opposing those increases, but the point is that the Government are raising more revenue in real terms than they were in 1979 and the increases are substantially higher than the RPI.

The cost of fuel and light has increased. The price of coal has gone up by 121 per cent., gas has gone up by 124 per cent. and electricity charges by 94 per cent. Household services generally from local authorities have gone up by 102 per cent. Fares and travel costs have risen by 95·6 per cent. Prescription charges have gone up by 1,200 per cent. —from 20p to £2·60. Annual repayment certificates for prescription charges have risen by 971 per cent.

Water rates have increased. In 1979 the average calculative water rate was £37·50. Last year it was £97·18, an increase of 165 per cent.—twice the level of the RPI. That is a form of hidden taxation. We must add to those the local authority services increases, the increases in the cost of school meals, school milk, capitation allowances, music lessons, school trips for kids, library charges, bus services, school transport, the planning charges of local authorities, home helps, community centres, day care centres, day nurseries and charges for residential home accommodation. Those have all been substantial increases, far in excess of the RPI.

6.45 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): The hon. Gentleman was talking about hidden taxation. Does he agree that inflation is the worst of the hidden taxations? Would he care to tell us about the record of the Labour Government on inflation?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We are now dealing with Government-induced inflationary increases in excess of the RPI. Would the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) care to identify any one of those that I have listed which was not Government-induced and which did not lead to an increase in the RPI?

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in 1975, under the Labour Government, Government borrowing as a proportion of

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

GDP was 9 per cent.—an all-time record? Is he trying to persuade us that that was a non-inflationary factor in the economy at that time?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall come to borrowing in a moment, as I have some interesting statistics about borrowing.

Added to those hidden increases is the reduction in student grants, which in effect means an increase in student fees, and the increases in central Government charges to farmers for Department of Industry services where they affect individuals. The massive house price inflation that has taken place since 1979 means that for every £1 spent on housing, people simply get less space. So who is getting a good deal: the house buyer in 1979 or the house buyer in 1988? In 1979 people bought more space for their money.

Hon. Members may think that the Government are reducing taxes, but, by pursuing that policy, they are increasing the costs for people in this country. We now have increased spectacle charges, charges for sight tests, passports, dental charges, museum charges and charges on culture through the theatre. Ironically, there are increased health costs for those who are driven to pursue private medicine. It might be said that their costs would have been lower had they been able to secure that standard of health care within the public sector. Indeed, that must be part of the inflationary equation that we are examining.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. I have given way twice already and I have to think of my hon. Friends.

Legal costs have increased, particularly with the reduction in legal aid that we are to discuss in the House tomorrow. This so-called policy of reducing taxation is an illusion. All that has happened is that taxes on income have been switched to taxes on expenditure and on services —particularly those run by local authorities and by central Government.

Let us examine where the money that people seem to have in their pockets has actually come from and what is its origin. If we examine the expansion of credit, we find some very interesting figures. There has been a vast increase in the amount of credit available to the average householder in this country. If we examine credit from finance houses and specialist credit agencies and banks, we find that in 1979 the total of all private borrowings under those important headings, in so far as they affect the amount of coinage that one jingles in one's pockets, was £6·9 billion. In 1987 the figure was £23·6 billion. The amount of credit taken on by individuals in this country has almost quadrupled.

The amount of credit per household has risen from £345 in 1979 to £1,123 in 1987. The average person in Britain in 1979 was in hock to £123. Today that person is in hock to £423. There we have, once again, a threefold increase in the amount of personal credit to individuals in Britain. They fund that credit with the illusory tax deductions that they have received over the past seven years.

With a sleight of hand and clever talk at the Dispatch Box, and because people feel more money in their pockets, the British public have convinced themselves that they are better off. They are no better off at all. This is all an illusion. That is why, under the solid financial arrangements that characterised the Labour Government's management of the economy, they were far better off.

Mr. Carrington: I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene in the Committee's deliberations on clauses 22 and 23, because together they constitute the fundamental economic policy that the Government have been pursuing since 1979. It is the engine that has created the tremendous growth and strength that have turned Britain round from being the sick man of Europe, with an economy that looked to many to be in terminal decline in the 1970s, to what is now considered to be a miracle economy on a par with the German economy in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman says that in the 1950s and 1960s the German economy was considered to be a miracle economy. If that is the case and he now considers Britain to be a miracle economy, how does he explain the Jaguar company having to draw to the attention of its work force the fact that Mercedes workers produce 50 per cent. more cars per man per shift than they do at Jaguar?

Mr. Carrington: The hon. Gentleman will recall that Britain's motor car industry was destroyed by the previous Labour Government's policies in the 1960s and 1970s. I regret that Jaguar, like British Leyland, has still not succeeded in recovering entirely from the Labour Government's policies, despite its excellent export achievement to the United States, even with the strong dollar and, consequently, the high value of sterling against the dollar.

The German economy was based on more than that, as the hon. Gentleman knows. It was based on private enterprise and incentives for people to work. That is what the Government have been doing since 1979. That has been our great achievement and that is what has created a strong, prosperous economy, with the potential for continued growth, out of the disaster of the late 1970s.

I want to look for a moment at the specific tax changes which clauses 22 and 23 cover. The reduction in the basic rate of tax to 25 per cent. is to be welcomed not only because it reduces the tax burden that the individual has to pay and so encourages incentive and enables people to look more towards their own income to pay for what they are doing, but because it has the effect of enabling companies—a point often missed by Opposition Members —to pay their employees better because they can retain more of the pay that the company gives them. That in itself enables the company to invest more in its activities rather than having to pay, through the prosperous production of goods and services, more in income to its employees, which is then taken by an ever-grasping Government.

Therefore, tax cuts not only encourage people to work much harder, but, more important, enable much more of Britain's wealth to be retained by the companies, which enables them to invest their earnings in more productive activities.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that tax cuts also encourage people to save and thereby encourage the provision of savings to industry through borrowings, making it much easier to expand the economy? For example, does he agree that Japan is much more advanced than we are because its level of savings is so much higher than ours?

Mr. Carrington: I agree with my hon. Friend, but I shall come to that very point when I discuss the 40 per cent. rate of tax, when it becomes even more important.

Most people outside the House, and the majority of hon. Members, will agree that the tax on the lower paid is still far too high. It is too high partly because the income tax band of 25 per cent. is still too high, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget statement, but also because the national insurance contribution raises that tax rate to an unacceptable level. We still have a long way to go in reducing that tax band even further so that those who do not receive additional support from the Government through the social security system can retain more of their own money and pay less to the Government, thus enabling them to provide adequately for themselves and their families. We have a lot further to go in reducing that tax band. I should like to see it reduced to 20 per cent. as soon as possible, and I should also like to see an adjustment on the national insurance charge at that level.

The benefit of the 25 per cent. band is incontrovertible. It benefits the less well off——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): How does the hon. Gentleman explain the fact that 3·5 million working people do not earn sufficient to pay tax in the first place, even under the proposals in the Bill? In other words, they are on low wages. It may well be that it is the low-wage economy that has enabled employers to retain some money. We must face the fact that 3·5 million people will not benefit from the Budget.

Mr. Carrington: It is an extraordinary fact that Opposition Members are always looking at those whom the Budget does not address rather than those to whom it is directed.

Ms. Armstrong: They are all citizens.

Mr. Carrington: The citizens who do not pay tax are addressed through the social security system and the increased money that we are giving to it. The changes within the social security system also reduce the poverty trap. Whatever the problems of such people, there is no excuse for not addressing the case of those who pay too high a rate of basic tax.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a tribute to the Government that we have progressively increased tax thresholds by more than the rate of inflation, so that we keep increasing the number of people who are no longer within the tax system? The hon. Member for Leeds, West (West Battle) is trying to use that fact to prove the converse. Surely it is the very success of the Government's economic policy in taking people out of tax that creates the position about which he is complaining.

Mr. Carrington: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Budget has taken another 750,000 people out of tax. That is a great benefit, not only to them, but to everyone else, because of the effect of that in reducing the bureaucracy that is needed to collect that tax.

7 pm

I should like to see, as I am sure my hon. Friend would, far more people taken out of the tax system. One of the great problems in our country is that the tax system still bites far too low down in the system. I believe that the increase in the thresholds in clause 24—which we are not discussing, Mr. Cormack, so I shall not digress to it—is very much to be welcomed.

I turn now to what is possibly the more contentious side of our debate this afternoon—the reduction of the higher rate of tax to 40 per cent. As has been said, this increases the incentive to work and I believe that that will be shown as the change develops.

Dr. Reid: I am sorry to come back on this point, but if the hon. Member is correct in saying that the decrease in tax increases the incentive to work, why is it that the most extensive study on the issue, costing £500,000, extending over eight years and 22 papers, and based on interviews with thousands of people, has found exactly the opposite?

Mr. Carrington: I was rather expecting that intervention. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave. It appears that that study—the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has the advantage over most Government Members of having seen the study—addresses the short-term effects. Taxation and economic policies should address the long-term effects, not just the short-term ones. The reduction in the higher rate of tax is designed to ensure that long-term growth in the economy is sustained.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman in that I do not believe that the argument for the reduction of the higher rate of tax to 40 per cent. relies nearly as strongly on the incentive to work as does the reduction of the basic rate to 25 per cent. I believe that the argument is much stronger and much more easily shown to exist elsewhere. If people are given all their own money to look after, they will invest it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) referred to the much higher saving rates in Japan, and indeed they are two or three times those in this country, if I am not mistaken. That is a major difference between the success of the Japanese economy and the success of ours. However, because of the policies that have been followed by the Government since 1979, there has been a major change in savings. Whereas at one time 5 per cent. of the population owned shares, the figure is now 20 per cent.

I recognise, as I am sure some Opposition Members will wish to point out, that owning shares that are listed on the stock exchange does not mean direct investment in industry. The strength and liquidity of the stock exchange are the medium by which industry can get the funds that it needs for productive investment, so the increase in the number of people who own shares is the necessary precursor of a high investment economy and the high saving ratios that we need to achieve.

Mr. Jack: Does my hon. Friend agree that the initial foray into the stock market in buying an existing company has assisted small investors to fund new issues, which are a form of net investment?

Mr. Carrington: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment, because it brings me on to my next point, which I believe to be the strongest argument in favour of reducing the top rates of tax. It is that our economy needs people who will take risks.

Is the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) trying to intervene?

Ms. Armstrong: No, I am listening

Mr. Carrington: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for listening to me and I am glad that waving her finger is one of the ways in which she listens most keenly.

Risk taking in investment is one of the major ways in which new industries start up and in which the future economic growth and success of this country, as of most other countries, will develop. I take the point that has been made by the Opposition about gambling. People will invest in what they believe to be a potentially successful project, one in which they have faith, but in which perhaps few other people have faith.

That is not a risk that a committee will take. It is not a risk that a Government can take with other people's money. It is a risk that the investor can take with his or her own money. That is something that needs to be encouraged, and the only way to encourage people to take risks is to make sure that the potential return on the investment is enough to reward them, enough to make the risk of failure, the chance of bankruptcy, acceptable.

That return was impossible to achieve with a tax rate of 83 per cent., particularly as so much of the earnings of any successful company turned into unearned income, so-called, which was then taxed at 98 per cent. We reduced that to 60 per cent., and that in itself was a great achievement, but 60 per cent. of an investor's return from a high-risk venture still went to the Government. We are now reversing that ratio so that 40 per cent. will go to the Government, who benefit enormously but take no risks, while 60 per cent. will go to the risk taker. That is a major advantage, and a major encouragement to people to invest in the new industries on which we all rely to produce the great wealth that this country needs to see us over the decline of North sea oil revenues in the 1990s and the 21st century.

I believe that the country will greatly welcome these tax cuts. I believe that they will be the engine for increased economic prosperity and that the Committee should vote with enthusiasm in support of these two clauses.

Ms. Armstrong: I agree with one thing that the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said—that as politicians we are concerned not simply with numbers but with the wider aspects of decisions that we make in economic policy. In many senses, that is what we are faced with tonight. We are faced with numbers that people have been arguing about and about which there is very little consensus. Government Members have not been able to offer any direct evidence or any certainty that their supposition that decreasing the top rate of tax will necessarily increase investment and incentives to work harder is correct. They suppose that, but they are not able to give us any evidence for it.

As politicians, we are inevitably concerned with more than that. We are concerned with what a tax will do in those terms, but we are also concerned with the nature of the society that we wish to create. Any financial decision made by the House has a value attached to it and a morality underlying it. In many senses, the Opposition are in contention not just on the figures but on the morality —I might say lack of morality—demonstrated in the tax change with which we are dealing.

As I have said, the evidence that Government Members have been able to produce about precisely what this tax change will mean in terms of increased incentive is at best neutral. The evidence from them is nil. The evidence from reading the texts and the economists is at best neutral. How will the Government monitor their assertion? What will they do to demonstrate the validity of their assertion that cutting back the top rate will result in increased investment, increased productivity and the creation of more jobs? I shall be interested to hear the precise manner in which the Government propose to monitor it. Will they leave it to rhetoric? I hope not; we deserve a little more than that.

Mr. Ian Taylor *rose*——

Ms. Armstrong: No, I shall not give way. I am sorry, but I shall not collude in any more filibustering.

Mr. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Crowther. I wished to ask a perfectly clear question. It might have been interesting. It certainly was not part of a filibuster.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. Stan Crowther): The hon. Member knows that that is not a point of order.

Ms. Armstrong: The essential point about the clause is what it demonstrates about the Government's view of fairness. We have heard something about that from the Government. More than anything else, it demonstrates the Government's complete abandonment of any sense of fairness. Every citizen has an important contribution to make, and each contribution should be measured and valued. That fact is as important to unemployed people and low income earners as it is to high income earners.

Who has made the greatest contribution to the economic recovery that we hear about? As an example, I cite someone in my constituency who, eight years ago, worked for the Consett Iron Company. As hon. Members will know, that company is now closed. Ministers have been lauding the improvements that have been made in Consett as an example of Government success. I welcome any improvements and any jobs that are created. But an example of the cost to people who work at Consett—there are still many who do not—is a man who, eight years ago, worked in the steelworks. He now performs a higher grade job but takes home exactly the same amount as he took home eight years ago. That is an enormous cost for him and his family to pay. They have paid and will continue to pay that contribution to the economic recovery. We have heard from the Government that those who have gained substantially from the economic recovery are to be rewarded, while folk such as that man have been severely penalised in the past few weeks by the attack on housing benefits and by changes in the family income supplement and other benefits.

We are debating the Government's sense of values and morality. I was sickened by much of the preaching by Ministers about what other people should do about morals in this country. My constituents and I live day by day with the real effects of moral values. Last weekend, someone came to my surgery and said, "I am almost ashamed to live in a country whose Government are prepared to reward the rich at the cost of the poor. They are prepared not only to do that but to justify it."

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to you, Mr. Crowther, for inviting me to contribute to the discussion about these two clauses of the Finance Bill.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) spoke with her characteristic passion about matters relating to the north-east of England.

Let me entertain Opposition Members for a moment with a political creed that may be more to their own tune. I refer to events in the Soviet Union that were recently depicted on the BBC's "Money Programme". We have heard much about incentives. If there is a video nasty that Opposition Members should watch, it is a rerun of the first of three reports from the Soviet Union. That video nasty will show them what the word "incentive" means for a group of workpeople who, for years and years, have had their Government on their backs. The message of that programme is clear—"Let us have the freedom to express ourselves; let us earn what we can; let us keep it and invest it; let us go forward and provide products that people are looking for and that our state enterprise is clearly not able to provide."

I am delighted to see Opposition Members nodding their heads in agreement. The thesis of incentive is precisely what our approach to tax cuts is about. I wonder how many Opposition Members have sat, as I have, and negotiated wage claims with workpeople—albeit in places where wage rates were not particularly high. One of the crucial parts of that negotiation concerns who is to pay the rate of income tax. If tax rates are coming down, such negotiations are far more realistic when one is talking about a rate of pay for a certain job and not negotiating who is to to pay a given tax rate.

7.15 pm

Dr. Reid: As the hon. Gentleman is maligning the Soviet Union for the dreadful state of its economy, is he surprised to know that the highest rate of tax in the Soviet Union is precisely the rate that the Chancellor has introduced in the Budget—40 per cent.?

Mr. Jack: I am delighted that people in the Soviet Union are paying taxes. Perhaps some people were under the impression that everything is a freebie in the Soviet Union and no tax is paid. I was not, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, slighting the Soviet Union. I rejoice in the outburst of the realisation of the benefit of incentive, as the television programme showed. If the hon. Gentleman cares to watch the rerun, he could learn a useful lesson.

As I was saying before the hon. Gentleman intervened, the benefit of lower taxation is that negotiations on the rate for the job are far more realistic. One does not negotiate who is to pay the tax. More important, it shows workpeople that it is worth putting in the extra effort. That is where the incentive element comes in. In 1979, when I started to negotiate wage rates in the produce industry —they were 35 per cent. under the Labour Government —people were asking, "Why should I bother? Every extra pound that I earn will be taken from me by the tax man." Opposition Members should cut out all the rhetoric and fancy economic history lessons. It is what the man sees on the bottom line of his pay cheque that makes all the difference.

Mr. Battle: As the hon. Gentleman is introducing the notion of what the man sees on the bottom line, what advice would he give my constituents who have jobs and who earn less than half the average wage—according to the Government's figures, that is £224 a week—and gain precisely nothing from the Budget? They are angry because tax cuts have gone primarily to those who earn well over £50,000 a year and not to those earning below £7,000 a year.

Mr. Jack: I listened to what the hon. Gentleman said, but he should bear in mind that since this Government came to office some of the lower-paid workers to whom he referred have been lifted out of paying tax altogether. In addition to those who, by the indexation of allowances would otherwise have come out of paying tax, 1·7 million people today no longer pay income tax. That is what the Government have done. I agree with my hon. Friends who have said that still fewer people should be paying tax. I subscribe to the view that the income tax rate should go further down from 25p.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I should like to make this point before the hon. Gentleman intervenes again. In order to address the point about a man on average or below earnings, I should say that in the tax year 1978-79 average earnings in this country were £92·80. The tax rate was 35 per cent. In the current financial year, average earnings in this country are £244·70, and the tax rate is 25 per cent. That is a tribute to the strength of the economy under the Chancellor's direction. It enables us to have a debate as to whether we should approve in this Bill a tax rate of 25 per cent. As has been said, perhaps that is part of the reason why Conservative Members are able to make the proposition and you are attacking us for doing so.

The Temporary Chairman: Order. I am not attacking the hon. Gentleman. He must address his remarks to the Chair and the use of the word "you" gives rise to certain misunderstandings.

Mr. Jack: I apologise, Mr. Crowther, if I give the impression that I am using you as a tool with which to attack Opposition Members. My remarks were directed across the Chamber, not at your good self.

I have made the point about average earnings and the relationship with tax. One of the strongest weapons in my campaign during the election was the ability to tell people what a Labour Government would cost in terms of income tax. Some of the estimates referred to a tax rate of up to 50 per cent. As one of my hon. Friends has said, it was difficult to work out precisely what the rate of income tax would have been under a Labour Government. I am certain that that is what encouraged people to vote for the Conservative party. However, next time, when I tell them that I sat opposite the pro-tax party—the people who wanted to vote against reductions in income tax—they will come flocking back to vote for me. There may be a few side issues that may deflect people on Thursday, but the dawn of realisation will come as Opposition Members expound the cost of their policies.

One Opposition Member asked what people think of a 25p rate of income tax. Unlike Opposition Members, I went out and asked my constituents. Conservatives do not just listen; they go and ask questions. I went out with some of my younger supporters and did a survey. One Saturday morning I spoke to a random sample of 100 people in the shopping square in St. Annes. Hon. Members may be surprised to know that 70 per cent. of the people to whom we spoke were in favour of the income tax cuts that the Government have proposed. However, I advise my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that they will have to do a little more persuading to get the message across that we are spending nearly £2 billion extra on the National Health Service, because that message has not

[Mr. Jack]

filtered through. Despite what Opposition Members have said, people will be persuaded that they can have tax cuts with fairness. It is important to know that people are in favour.

I carried out another survey last year, also before the election. I met an 18-year-old man who was the reserve goalkeeper for Tranmere Rovers football club. He was not on high earnings, and I asked him what he thought of the previous Budget when tax cuts were made. He said, "Marvellous. With taxes down, I can go to work. It will not cost me any more and I will have a bit more in my pocket." Think about how much happier he will feel this year. It is the kind of save that any 'keeper' would want to make.

I want to point out to Opposition Members one or two salient facts about higher-rate taxpayers. In the tax year 1978-79 there were 760,000 higher rate taxpayers. Today there are 1,170,000. When we came to office, those taxpayers contributed £800 million at today's prices. Today, higher-rate taxpayers contribute £3·1 billion. Their share of the tax burden in this country has risen to 28·5 per cent. They are paying their way.

The change in top rates is a good measure, because it will increase tax revenues, as will the reduction in standard rate tax. In 1978-79, when the tax rate was 33p in the pound, the revenue from income tax was £18·5 billion. This year is is estimated to be £31·1 billion. There seems to be an inextricable causal link between increasing the tax revenue and reducing the tax rate. That has enabled the Government to spend record sums of money on health, social services and social security. I have to advise Opposition Members that that is why I shall go into the Lobby tonight and vote in favour of these clauses.

I make a plea for a group whose income tax rates deserve special consideration—elderly people. I realise that an elderly person who enters a rest home, and who has no savings, will pay no income tax and will effectively receive £7,500 of income without tax. However, a person on the new income tax rate of 25 per cent. has to have a gross taxable income of about £8,500 to be in the same position as the elderly person. I believe that we have work to do on the taxation position of the elderly. I see that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken note of that. Perhaps he might comment on it in his reply.

These are good clauses. They are worthy of our support. The case that Conservative Members have made is incontrovertible.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): My contribution will be brief. I am not a member of the Committee that will be considering the Bill upstairs. Therefore, I shall confine my remarks to the National Health Service and the relationship between public spending and the level of financing of that service. I have heard so much flatulence from the Government Benches tonight that, if anyone wishes to avail themselves of may professional services I shall be pleased to oblige. I shall not charge anything, because, of course, I am against that.

There are many causes to which national income can be applied more worthily than the tax cuts about which we are speaking.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Moonie: No, I will not give way. I have only just started.

Among those causes is the relief of poverty. I sometimes wonder whether Conservative Members understand what poverty means, when they blithely talk about average earnings of £240 a week. I assure the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) that in my constituency there are not too many people who earn that amount, particularly in a manual or skilled job in a factory. Certainly the vast majority of people in the Health Service do not earn that amount. I have not met many people, when I have been canvassing during the past few weeks, who earn that amount. I would be very glad to meet this mythical average person, as I am afraid there are very few in Kirkcaldy.

There are more worthy causes to which we can devote our income—for example, housing and the NHS in which I have worked for many years.

I should like to confine my remarks to the need for additional spending on health and social services. I am not naive enough to believe that spending on the NHS alone will improve the nation's health. However, when measured on the rather crude indices by which we measure health in this country, it will, on the whole, increase spending on the relief of poverty and on the other areas that I have mentioned.

However, there are several areas in the NHS, which, during the past few years, have had prolonged underfunding. I compare that underfunding with the perceived needs of the people in this country. There are several areas in which increased spending on the NHS would have great effect. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has touched briefly upon them.

We should remember that the funding of the pay awards for nurses, doctors and paramedical staff a few weeks ago will do nothing for the present problems of the NHS. They will only stop them becoming worse. I am glad that those pay increases have been funded. However, I would feel happier if there were the same pay increases in the pipeline for other groups of workers in the National Health Service. Otherwise, the position will get worse than it was even last year.

During the past seven years, there has been cumulative underfunding of the NHS of nearly £2 billion at today's prices. The Select Committee, of which I am glad to be a member, said that £1 billion should be spent in the short-term on remedying some of the deficiencies in the NHS.

There are seven sectors on which money should be spent. The first and most important is community care for people who are unable to look after themselves, such as those who have a mental handicap or illness, elderly people who are infirm or suffering from dementia, and physically disabled people.

For many years I worked to try to develop a service in Fife for those groups. Shortly before I left that employment, I identified a £10 million spending programme that would have alleviated between 10 and 20 per cent. of the immediate need for those services in that area. I used a crude measure—most indices used in health are crude—but when scaled up it came to £150 million for Scotland and 10 times that amount for the United Kingdom. I defy any Conservative Member to say that it would be less.

7.30 pm

Accommodation, caring staff, special services and research will be needed merely to indentify the needs of those groups, particularly elderly people, who, unlike the other groups, live at home, often in desperate deprivation. I think that £1·5 billion is probably an underestimate of the amount needed, but it shows that the Select Committee's request for £1 billion in total was not unreasonable.

The second and third sectors, which are linked, relate to after-care in the community. Full advantage must be gained from the efficient system for acute care introduced by the Griffiths proposals. I accept that those proposals have increased the efficiency of the acute sector and that more people are passing through the system. However, they are doing so more quickly. That means that the burden of after-care falls on general practitioners and nursing staff in the community. I have received many representations from GPs, who say that they are unable to provide the level of after-care that is needed because of the needs of their other patients.

Clearly, more money needs to be spent to increase the number of trained nursing staff in the community to deal with after-care. There is no point in pushing people through the system faster if that leads to ill effects because of people being discharged from hospital to their homes too quickly with inadequate care being provided. It is ridiculous that over the past six months efficient units have had to close because of insufficient funds rather than work to relieve waiting lists for operations. No private industry would accept such nonsense, so I do not see why the National Health Service should.

The fourth sector on which more money should be spent is preventive medicine. It is more difficult to define the total sums needed in preventive medicine, to which the Government have rightly given priority in their White Paper on primary health care. The Government have not said that they will put money into preventive medicine, but considerable increases are clearly required. In that regard, one needs to think only of the vast increases in costs associated with tackling AIDs, developing screening services and the many other parts of preventive medicine that could have a real effect on the health of our people.

The fifth sector is information systems. It is clear that we need better information systems to be able to function effectively. To do so we need not only to develop computer systems—at present they do not exist in an effective form in the Health Service—but to staff them. I know of no health authority that can recruit the necessary staff because the wages paid are so low compared with those paid by private industry. If we do not get the staff to develop computers properly, we shall not be able to attribute costings properly or to take full advantage of the improvements in efficiency and effectiveness that would flow as a result.

The sixth sector, which is often overlooked, concerns alleviating low wages in the National Health Service, which directly contribute to ill health. When porters, cleaners and kitchen staff are taking home wages of £70 or £80 a week, clearly something is wrong with the National Health Service. There is no way in which a family can live on such an income. Rather than prate about taking people out of the tax net altogether, it would be better if they were paid enough to get back into it. That would at least give those people some self-respect. People to whom I have spoken have told me that they would be only too pleased to earn enough money to be able to afford to pay tax.

The seventh sector was covered by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East—the need to address the backlog of maintenance and repairs and the cuts in spending on essential equipment which have been such a feature of the National Health Service over the past few years. If we looked at hospitals within a five-mile radius of this Chamber, we would see peeling walls and damaged windows and stonework. That is what has happened as a result of the spending restrictions. Clearly, vast amounts of money need to be spent.

As a whole, I do not believe that the Select Committee's demand for £1 billion comes anywhere near reflecting the needs of the National Health Service. If I had a choice —I shall vote against these proposals—I would wish to see the money spent on the service in which I have worked for so long, which I thought would provide adequately for the people in this country but which, sadly, has not.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) made a Health Service speech. I do not wish to follow him except to observe that one justification for reducing income tax is that it often leads to an increase in tax revenue. That is one of the reasons why the Government have been abie to increase substantially the funding of the National Health Service.

It is demonstrably true that tax reductions improve the supply side of the economy, which is how the Government have made additional allocations for the National Health Service. I noticed that the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy did not deny that point.

Opposition Members speak as though they have a monopoly of concern about these matters. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) littered her speech with the word "morality". There is nothing moral about high taxation. The Labour party's idea of compassion and concern seems to be compulsorily to extract more money from citizens and redistribute it according to a centrally determined formula. That shows a touching and misplaced belief in the automatic efficiency and effectiveness of collective provision, as against the voluntary system of earning, saving and giving, which has been the engine of success of this Government.

My main reason for supporting the income tax reductions is that they tilt the taxation system in the right direction—in favour of earning and income. For far too long in this country it has been difficult, if not impossible, to build up capital out of earnings, which is why the savings institutions rely far too much on the tax privileges of certain forms of saving such as purchases of housing, through mortgage interest relief, and saving through pensions. Perhaps Chancellors will address themselves to those matters in future Budgets, but it is much better that everyone should keep much more of what they earn and make their own decisions about the form of savings that they wish to make, free of distortions from allowances and exemptions. The reductions outlined in clauses 22 and 23 go a long way in that direction.

Of course Opposition Members do not welcome these reductions. They look back, like fiscal dinosaurs, with nostalgia to the old days of high marginal rates of income tax. I look back on those days with mixed feelings because I am an accountant and I made a reasonable living out of

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advising people to avoid penal—indeed, confiscatory—levels of personal taxation. The real damage done was that such tax rates gave every incentive to the taxpayer to pursue capital gains rather than earnings from salaries and wages. Coupled with clause 92, which equates the rates of capital gains and income tax, clauses 22 and 23 decisively end that damaging distortion.

Rather than making party political points, which would perhaps be more appropriate to a Second Reading debate, I wish to pursue the effect of the changes on the dividend policy of companies—a subject that I believe has received too little attention. When we had very high rates of income tax, shareholders naturally preferred to go for capital growth, taxed at 30 per cent., rather than receiving the profits of the company by way of dividends taxed at up to 98 per cent. As I said, the equation of the rates of capital gains and income taxes removes that bias.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary why it is necessary to retain the close company provisions on the statute book that continue to assume the opposite incentive—that is, that it is still in shareholders' interests to keep profits within companies rather than distributing them. I am sure that I do not need to remind the Committee that a close company is one controlled by fewer than a certain number of individuals or trusts. Before the war, such companies were very common because most of our big industrial concerns started as family companies controlled by comparatively few shareholders.

The difference in tax rates at that time between the standard rate of income tax, which applied to so-called registered companies, and the higher rates of income tax meant that those shareholders had every incentive to keep the profits within the companies that they controlled. It was therefore necessary to put on the statute book a range of anti-avoidance provisions, known as close company provisions, which, in certain circumstances, taxed those companies as though the profits had been distributed.

Close companies are now very much less common. By and large, they have been replaced by public limited companies with thousands of shareholders who do not have a direct and controlling influence over their distribution policy. More important, the alignment of capital and income taxes removes the incentive to keep the profits within those companies. It could be argued that under the imputation system of corporation tax, which we have had for about 15 years, it is in the interests of both shareholders and company to distribute profits because advance corporation tax, paid at the time when a dividend is paid, is allowable to shareholders as a tax credit.

By reducing the upper rate to 40 per cent., the Bill brings it down to very near the rate of corporation tax, which is 35 per cent. Therefore, there is now almost no advantage in accumulating profits within a corporate structure. Indeed, there may be a disadvantage. It is often overlooked that there is a potential double charge to capital gains tax if that gain is made within a company. The company pays capital gains tax once on the sale of the asset and the shareholder pays a further full 30 per cent. capital gains tax upon selling the shares.

I conclude that recent changes—in the Finance Bill and particularly in clauses 22 and 23—have completely altered the comparative advantage in holding appreciating assets as an individual and holding those appreciating assets within a corporate structure. They have also profoundly altered the balance between keeping the profits within a company and distributing them by way of dividend.

If we combine those two factors, we find beyond question that the old incentive to use a non-distributing company as a way of sheltering income has completely gone. Yet we retain on the statute book a whole range of close company provisions that are complex to understand and expensive to administer. Therefore, I ask Ministers to consider reaping the full benefit of the simplified and lower tax rates that they are rightly putting before the House and to take an early opportunity to remove the close company tax provisions.

7.45 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): As I listened to the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), I was reminded of a suggestion made just after the war, I think by Churchill, that there ought to be two Chambers of the House of Commons—one to deal with foreign affairs and one to deal with economic affairs; the two were entirely different. It seems to me that this debate is entirely different from last Wednesday's debate in which we discussed the plight of millions of people under the housing benefit changes. Today we hear of the plight of the poor shareholder denied his benefits and unable to shelter his income. Last week we heard of many people who simply do not have an income behind which they can shelter.

Conservative Members owe much to Samuel Smiles when they outline their economic policy for the 1980s. Samuel Smiles wrote a particularly turgid volume whose only point was contained in the first few pages. Conservative Members' policy may be fine in theory, but it has little to do with the reality of economics for most people in this country.

Opposition Members have been chided because we have not outlined our proposals for basic rate tax. There are arguments for saying that the basic rate should be much lower than 25 per cent. Some of us would argue that a graduated system would be more appropriate than what we have at the moment, which is almost a flat-rate system —especially when one considers the effect of national insurance. Certainly marginal tax rates are too high for the low paid and, I would argue, too low for the high paid. it is absolute nonsense to have a system under which somebody pays the same whether he is earning £19,000 or £9,000.

I resent the lectures that we have received on the plight of those who pay higher tax. We are accused of being a party that supports higher tax. When one considers that the percentage of tax and national insurance paid by the low paid has increased under this Government, it is clear that it is wrong to criticise us as a party of high taxation. Those on low incomes are paying more in direct and in indirect taxation than when the Government came to office.

Our beliefs about tax rates are properly the subject of another argument. We are discussing what should be done in the current financial year and the argument is about the division of wealth in our society. We are told that the country is doing well. For years, we were told that people

could not have more because the country was not doing well. Now that the Chancellor says that the country is doing well, more people should surely benefit.

We are witnessing a shift from the poor to the better off in society. We have had the benefits of North sea oil and the benefits, we are told, of the sale of nationalised industries, which we all used to own but which are now owned by a minority. Why should not all of us benefit rather than simply those at the top of the income scale?

We must also remember that those who have enjoyed tax cuts have benefited partly because of the £4 billion removed from those who are worse off. The question that we should address tonight is what could the tax cuts be spent on that might make some individuals not so well off directly, but might make everybody better off?

There has been much talk about incentives. I hope that Conservative Members will tell me why rich people need more money to make them work harder while poor people need less money to make them work harder. In talking about incentives, let us consider scientists. We are told time and again that scientists leave this country because of the incidence of personal taxation, whereas I suspect that scientists leave jobs in this country, especially in the public service, because we do not spend enough on infrastructure, resources or laboratories.

For example, a scientist neighbour of mine says that he will benefit from the reduction in the basic rate of tax, if it is approved by the House. But he complains that he does not have the materials or facilities for his work. That makes him consider leaving this country to go abroad. It is a question not of personal taxation but of the low value that the Government attach to investment as a whole.

The tax burden is disproportionately high on those with low incomes. Income is much more than cash in hand. The value of our Health Service, our schools, the roads, buses and transport costs all contribute to one's income. Perhaps it is a benefit in kind, although not a direct benefit. But we ought to consider it, as well as the negative effects. For example, electricity price rises come into the equation when one considers disposable income after meeting one's outgoings, in the normal course of life. When those indirect benefits are under attack from the Government, it is no wonder that we fear a reduction in the basic rate of tax to 25p.

Most people do not want to live in a dependency culture. In Scotland we are constantly told that we live in a dependency culture. That is why we did not vote for this Government. I understand from reading the press today that the Prime Minister will visit us more often. I welcome that because every time she comes to Scotland the Labour party does better. Indeed, it is a pity she cannot come to Scotland before the Thursday elections.

We do not want to live in a dependency culture because we are well aware of the fact that these tax cuts are paid for by cuts in the living standards of those who are less well off. We have to contrast the fact that some people will be better off as a result of the reductions that these two clauses would implement with the fact that more and more people will go to the social fund—that latter-day soup kitchen of the 1980s—for basic necessities. The Government have cut more than £1 billion from social security benefits. They will achieve that saving in the next five to six years. We have to contrast that with the fact that the minority of higher-rate taxpayers will be better off directly. At the same time, the tax breaks and tax shelters, whatever one calls them, will still be available to the well-off.

When we discuss the effect of the two clauses, we should consider what else that money might have been spent on. Take child benefit. Since 1979, the real value of the benefit has fallen by 3 per cent. The failure to uprate it has meant that the Government have more money, which they can make available to the better-off. Indeed, the abolition of higher rate tax bands above 40 per cent. will cost £2 billion once they are implemented. That same money could have been spent on child benefit to increase it by £4·29 a week.

It has been said that one of the most effective ways of dealing with the problems of poverty and bringing help to children is through child benefit. That was said by the Secretary of State for Employment in 1982. If it was right then, surely it is right now.

It is the same story with pensions. Under the previous Labour Government pensions increased in real terms by 20 per cent., whereas under this Government they have increased by only 2·2 per cent. in real terms. I stress that the benefits given to the minority in this country who pay the top rates of tax, as well as the benefits of those of us who are fortunate enough to be working, are paid for to a great extent from money that is being taken from those who do not earn their income but are dependent on pensions or benefits.

It is certainly the case, as many Conservative Members have said, that this Government have increased expenditure in some areas—for example, the social security programme, which has increased by about 15 per cent. One has to remember, however, that more people are claiming benefits than in 1979, which is one reason why the amount of money that the Government spend has increased.

The Government say that we are spending too much. The answer is to reduce not the amount that individuals get, but the number of people who are forced to claim and to live in a dependency culture. That is illustrated effectively by the level of unemployment, which has increased dramatically under this Government. It is true that it is coming down now, although that has been achieved mainly by fiddling the way in which the figures are calculated.

Despite all that, unemployment in my constituency is still 20 per cent. A study has been carried out by Professor Sinfield at Edinburgh university, in which he calculates that the indirect cost of each unemployed person is about £6,557 a year. In my constituency in central Edinburgh alone it costs £33 million to maintain 20 per cent. unemployment. The money that we propose to give taxpayers by the reduction in basic and higher rates could have been used to prime the economy and get people back to work, thus reducing their dependence on unemployment and other benefits. The Government could have addressed their attention to that.

The better-off will get their tax cuts, which enable some people to buy their way out of trouble, whether they do so by means of a private operation or by buying education for their children. But the tax cuts are funded by cuts in the indirect income of the majority of people in this country. They are a benefit in kind to which people are entitled and which they value. Those indirect benefits have been eroded by the Government time and again. They believe in precious little provision of communal benefits and

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services, and say that that money ought to be given to individuals who can choose to buy things because they have the economic power to do so.

All of us have a contingent interest in health, schools and all public services. That contingent interest is under attack, and has been attacked by the Government for many years. The price of the tax cuts is an erosion of that communal wealth upon which most of us rely, and which we want to continue to rely on and support. Public services in Britain used to be the envy of the world. That whole philosophy is under attack by the Government in their aim to give tax cuts to a minority. I do not begrudge people the extra money, particularly those on basic rates. Of course they will welcome it. But we must remember that, although they may get a few pence extra each week overall, they as individuals and we as a country are much poorer.

Mr. Barry Field: Higher-rate income tax has existed since 1973-74, when unified income tax replaced the previous income tax and surtax systems. Since 1978-79, the number of higher-rate taxpayers has increased significantly. In 1987-88 there were 75 per cent. more higher-rate taxpayers than in 1979-80 when the pattern of five higher rates from 40 per cent. to 60 per cent. was introduced. As a consequence, revenue from the higher rates has doubled in real terms. This growth in the impact of the higher rates reflects the fall in the higher rate threshold relative to average earnings.

In 1987-88 a married man started to pay tax at 60 per cent. when his income reached 3·8 times the average. In 1979-80 the same ratio was 4·7 times. These tax reductions show clearly that less tax equals more revenue. The desire to make everyone poorer to help the poor is part of the same dependency culture that requires every hon. Member to contribute to my wife's child benefit. The desire to spread a little jam thinly has been the bedevilment of our society.

I welcome the clauses, and I did so at the time of my right hon. Friend's Budget, when I said that lower taxes would create jobs in my constituency. It has done so. At the weekend I visited the boat yards in my constituency and the owners told me that they had had more inquiries and more orders than ever before. Some of those businesses date back scores, if not hundreds, of years. The craftsmen, the shipwrights, the timber yards, the steel works, the engine manufacturers and the electronics industry will benefit from that extra activity, which has resulted from the lower tax rates.

8 pm

My constituents know full well what it is to live in a low-wage, high-unemployment area. They also are aware of the benefits of low taxation because, biannually, the island witnesses the Admiral's cup series. Last year, incidentally, the first Japanese team visited the island. Every year the island witnesses the power boat race. My constituents see international wealth on their doorstep, especially when our EEC neighbours come over to compete in such races. In the past they have enjoyed a far lower tax rate than we did.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) mentioned his days of wage negotiation. He mentioned the bottom line of the wage packet. He obviously comes from a far posher background than me. In my day the bottom line meant accounts of businesses and wage packets meant stoppages. There is no doubt that the tax rates of previous years created a resistance to overtime. I encountered that time and again when I spoke to factory owners. When we had a lower rate of tax, the old disincentive was removed. Now that there are fewer stoppages, we find that there is a greater desire to work overtime in our factories and manufacturing industries.

I look forward to the day when Michael Caine cannot afford not to live in the United Kingdom for tax purposes. One cannot cut the taxes of people who do not pay any. There is no better monument to the most radical tax-cutting Finance Bill than the actions of the oldest Parliament of the Commonwealth, the Tynwald in the Isle of Man. That Parliament has taken fright at my right hon. Friend's Budget because it realises that Britain is fast becoming a tax haven. Its Bill, now awaiting Royal Assent, will retrospectively reduce the Isle of Man's rate of tax to 15 per cent. from 6 April. Such is the effect of the Budget and the tax clauses. That Parliament's action, more than anything else, clearly demonstrates the far-reaching revolution that my right hon. Friend commenced with his reforming, renowned Budget.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): It is fitting, as the health spokesman for our parties, that I should contribute to this debate. I could find far better use for the money that the Chancellor has set aside for the tax cuts, not least the Health Service.

The Government's intention in the Finance Bill is clear. They intend to destroy the consensus that has been built up in the past 70 years. This consensus has meant the use of taxation to redistribute money from the better-off to the worse-off. It is 79 years since Lloyd George introduced his great budget which laid the foundations of the modern welfare state. It was a system based on fairness, whereby all citizens got a fair deal. I still believe that we have a long way to go to achieve that objective, and the Government seem determined to go in the opposite direction.

The Government argue that by removing the higher rates of income tax they will provide an incentive for the better-off to work harder. They provide no evidence for that—perhaps because there is none. In the *New Statesman* on 25 March Mr. Russell Jones, an economist with Hoare Govett, said of the Budget:

> "There is no evidence to prove that a drop in tax from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent. will encourage people to work harder."

Why do the Government believe that one can make the rich work harder only by paying them more, but make the poor work harder only by cutting their tax? The Government do not have an economic policy. They are merely using the wealth of the country to reward their friends and penalise their enemies.

The billions of pounds that it cost, for example, to abolish the higher rate of tax would have been much better used to put an end to some of the most immediate problems facing the Health Service. It is an extraordinary situation when a Government can give away millions of pounds to the very rich in our society while waiting lists all over the country grow, ward closures are still a regular occurrence and some health authorities—notably in London—are forced to close all but emergency services and may even face total collapse.

I am sure that Conservative Members will say that they are doing something for the Health Service and that we should consider the nurses' pay rise. I naturally welcomed

that pay rise, but the Government behave as if they have shown the Health Service special favour by helping the nurses. In fact, every indication of the public's view suggests that they believe that the Government should fund nurses' pay rises fully as a matter of course, not as a special concession.

What really galls me about this debate—I have been present for most of it—is that the Chancellor had the chance to provide tax cuts and to do something about the dire problems facing the Health Service or the sickening growth of poverty. Instead of taking that option, which would have been the just and compassionate course of action, he decided to give the money to the most well-off in our society. That was, as many people have pointed out, an extremely bold thing to do, but I do not believe that it was admirable.

I feel sure that the Chancellor would not have dared to behave in such a callous way a year before the election. It is little wonder that we read that so many ordinary Conservative voters feel guilty about the tax cuts. I am not surprised. Many Conservative Members probably feel guilty, especially if their post bags, like mine, bring regular stories of unimaginable hardship brought about by the Government's changes to social security.

I find it ironic that, on the day before the Budget, I spoke on the Lords' amendments to the Social Security Bill. I highlighted the withdrawal of benefit to 16 and 17-year-olds. That was another retrograde step that could have been avoided by the Chancellor.

The whole basis of the Budget changes are retrogressive and reactionary. They seek to encourage greed and to help the rich at the expense of the poor. In the Government's mind we can see the vision of a society full of great wealth and of great poverty. The tax reforms, together with the poll tax and social security changes, represent the cruelness and callousness which are the Government's hallmarks. We shall have no part of that.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: As befits a party that spends most of its time shuffling backwards into the future, tonight we have been invited by the Labour party to enter into an era of high taxation, high expenditure and high Government borrowing—the Labour party's hallmarks in the 1970s.

It was interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) talk about the division of wealth in society, and the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) talk about consensus. Those were precisely the arguments used in the 1970s when, although we were obsessed with how wealth was divided, no growth was created to provide for the demands that were made upon it.

The Labour party talks about a consensus. The fact is that Britain, together with the vast majority of industrialised countries, is adopting low borrowing, low taxation, low Government spending policies. The only exception to that was France in 1982, just after President Mitterrand was elected. He embarked upon a huge rush of Government spending and a rush for growth, high Government borrowing and the nationalisation of industries. Two years later, as a result of those policies, France was forced to slam on the brakes in exactly the same way as the Labour party was forced to slam on the brakes in 1974-75, when the IMF had to come in.

It is instructive, given that the Opposition point at consensus as a paradigm of fiscal virtue, to look at the way in which they ran the country, when corporation tax rates were 52 per cent., personal tax rates on the basic rate were 35 per cent. and upper rates were 98 per cent. At that time, the economy was sterile and unproductive and was called time and again "the sick man of Europe."

Let us examine the statistics for the period over which the Opposition presided. Investment rose by only half a per cent. a year because people who were on higher tax rates were keeping only 2p in every extra pound that they earned. There was no risk cash nexus that would conceivably satisfy them, and justifiably so. Return on capital fell from 13 to 3 per cent. during the period of Labour control. As a result, productivity was only two thirds that of our OECD competitors. Small wonder, then, that Lord Shawcross, who had been a Labour Minister, talked about a hidden army of unemployment of about 2 million, because British industry was so hugely overmanned. The resulting inflation destroyed those same pensioners' savings that we have heard discussed today, with the shedding of so many crocodile tears.

The effective rate of taxation for average and low earners also rose because increases in income tax bands did not keep up with inflation, and a corollary of that was that our competitiveness, compared with that of our OECD rivals, fell, as unit labour costs increased by 117 per cent. in real terms in 10 years, while elsewhere they rose by only 45 per cent., so it was no surprise that we were locked out of the export markets that we had previously dominated.

Finally, the Labour Government borrowed 9 per cent. of GDP in 1975, which was a record. That meant that interest rates were so high that they squeezed the lifeblood out of industry. That is why the Government, together with virtually all our OECD competitors, have tried to recreate an environment in which enterprise, initiative and drive can flourish. That explains the huge increases in productivity in manufacturing industry—about 40 per cent. on average—in the past five years.

I recently went to an engineering plant in my constituency which makes wheels for the automotive industry and exports to companies such as DAF and Volvo. The plant has increased productivity in one part of its machine shop by about 30 per cent. in the past three months. As a result of the Government's policies, and virtually for the first time in 20 years, economic growth is greater than the rate of inflation and we have had the fastest growing economy for the past five years. That is inextricably bound up—it is not merely coincidence—with the reductions in corporate and personal taxation that the Government have brought in.

It is not surprising that manufacturing investment has risen—by 6 per cent. last year—and is expected to grow by 8 per cent. this year. There is now an incentive for people to mortgage their houses and invest in plant and equipment. One gentleman in my constituency decided to take a stake in the company that he had previously managed and mortgaged his house to do so——

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): If the story has been one of continuing success, as the hon. Gentleman claims, will he tell us when manufacturing investment will reach the level of 1979, when the Labour Government were last in office?

8.15 pm

Mr. Coombs: At that time the increase in manufacturing investment made little difference to productivity and

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competitiveness in the way that I have described. It is the end result of what is done with investment, rather than the amount put in, that is important. Lower income tax rates are the reason why, for instance, my local chamber of commerce, which has done a survey on local firms since the Budget, found that 90 per cent. expect to maintain an increased turnover, that 60 per cent. expect to increase their profitability, and that 90 per cent. expect to maintain or increase their employment as a direct result of the tax-cutting regime that the Government have introduced.

It was interesting that when the last survey was done by chambers of commerce in the west midlands, the one item that they wanted the Government to take care of above all at a national level was the introduction of lower income and corporation taxation. We delivered on income tax, and they are justified in being well pleased.

Opponents of the reductions in tax that we are discussing use two arguments. First, there is the transparent arguments that the cuts are regressive. We have heard already that since the Government reduced the higher rates of tax from 98 to 60 per cent. the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers have increased the amount that they pay from £5 billion a year to £12·5 billion, and that the proportion of the total that they pay has risen from 24 to 29 per cent. Furthermore, these tax cuts will benefit all 25 million taxpayers. As a result of doubling taxation allowances, 750,000 of them will be taken out of tax altogether. If the Opposition are in favour of lower taxation, why did they not introduce it? If we had kept the same real levels of tax bands as were in place when they left office, 1·7 million more people would pay tax now.

The second argument that the Opposition use is about the impact of lower taxation on the balance of payments. Of course, there is bound to be some impact in the form of export substitution and increased demand which will, to a certain extent, suck in imports, but the projected deficit of £4 billion in 1988-89, at 3 per cent. of GDP, is sustainable in a healthy and growing economy. The way to improve that figure is not through fiscal policy and increases in taxation, which will inevitably damage incentive and home demand, on which a large proportion of the basic parts of our manufacturing industry depend. The Government have taken action to stabilise exchange rates over the past two months by lowering interest rates, and that is what the policy should target. Eventually, I hope that we will join the EMS and make these sorts of interest rates more automatic than they now are.

We have also heard the argument that lower taxes allow an increase in resources. That must be self-evident, given that lower corporation taxes have allowed a £5 billion excess of revenue over the past year. It was interesting to hear the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) speak of the lack of investment in the National Health Service. It is precisely this Budget that has allowed us not only to invest £1·1 billion more in the Health Service—the largest increase in monetary terms in NHS history—but to add to that by £700 million from a contingency reserve that depended on tax revenues that were engendered by lower taxation rates.

Most important of all, a number of factors point to the confidence of the business community—the people who provide jobs—in the taxation regime of this and other Budgets introduced by the Government. *CBI News* called the Budget "A Budget for Growth". The CBI did not receive any reduction in corporate taxes in the Budget, but reckoned that the lower income taxes would give it the basic home market in which to sell and in which to continue its increases in productivity and profitability.

The Budget gave the incentive to grow to the 500 new businesses that are springing up every week. It created the environment for the sustained growth that has made our economy the fastest growing in Europe over the past three years. The Bill provides the basis on which we can continue the reductions in unemployment that have occurred for the past 20 successive months. It also gives industry confidence. That was shown by David Nickson, the president of the CBI, who said:

"Industry is starting to succeed in a better environment than it has known for some time."

That is a direct result of the tax-cutting regime instituted by the Government.

Mr. Morgan: Did he say that as well?

Mr. Coombs: No, but the implication was clear, as has been the implications through the Budget. It was a Budget for growth, prosperity and confidence for industry. That will lead to jobs and higher living standards. As we have seen over the past nine years, there has been a 27 per cent. increase in living standards for the average man. It will give hope to those on lower incomes that they can escape the dependency culture, and it will regenerate the confidence in industry that I have already described as occurring in my constituency.

If any further evidence of the importance of a low tax regime is needed, it can be seen in the relative figures since 1973 for the European Economic Community and the United States. Since 1973, with 50 per cent. of GDP taken in Government expenditure, the EEC, with a population of 300 million, has increased the number of jobs by about 1 million. In the United States, with a population of only 200 million, and with only one third of GDP taken in taxation and Government expenditure, the total number of extra jobs since 1973 has been 27 million, and 14 million in the past 10 years.

In short, a tax-cutting regime is essential for a dynamic, flexible and incentive-led economy. Lower taxes in an increasingly competitive international environment are no longer just an option, but a vital necessity.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): We have heard many extraordinary claims, but I must focus on the claim that the cuts in income tax by the Government have led to an increase in manufacturing investment. They may have led to many things, but they have not led to an increase in investment in manufacturing industry. That is why the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) was so bereft of an answer when questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek).

The hon. Gentleman attempted to advocate the Budget and the content of the Finance Bill. Many Conservative Members have not done that. They have spent their time attacking what Labour Chancellors did in the past or hypothesising about what Labour Chancellors will do in the future. Conservative Members are equally uneasy about the economic consequences of the Finance Bill and the Budget as they are about their social consequences.

We are dealing with some of the most vicious parts of an unjust and vicious Budget. Clauses 22 and 23 are

morally and fiscally indefensible and, as increasing numbers of Conservative Members have come to realise, politically indefensible.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): As the hon. Gentleman is considering morally indefensible matters, does he believe that a marginal tax rate of 98p in the pound, leaving recipients with 2p, is morally defensible?

Mr. Smith: I do not find it morally defensible to cut the marginal tax rates for the very rich, while those stuck in the poverty trap have an effective marginal tax rate of 80 or 90 per cent. That is not justifiable.

In the attempts by the Conservative Members to justify the unjustifiable, we hear the most remarkable arguments that defy economic logic and common sense and contradict their own stated objectives. Let us consider those much-vaunted claims that reduction in the higher rates of tax result in greater enterprise and effort. What is the evidence for that? We have had no evidence for that whatsoever, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) pointed out, the elusive lecturer Lindsey did not provide any evidence.

It is not good enough simply to claim that the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers will contribute a larger share of taxation. In itself, that proves nothing. Far from proving that the richest directors are working harder, it may simply show that they are finding it more worth while to pay themselves lavish increases, while holding down the wages of their employees. There is plenty of evidence from the new earnings survey that that is precisely what they have been doing since 1979. The 20 per cent. highest paid men have secured pay rises 42 per cent. greater than the lowest paid.

To make any sense of the claims about the share of revenue contributed by the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers, we must consider what is happening about the distribution of incomes and the share of tax revenue which income tax comprises. If, as is undoubtedly happening on the evidence of the new earnings survey, the very rich are able to get their hands on an increased share of the national income, their share of income tax collected will increase, even though the share of their own individual income falls. Similarly, as the share of the total revenue which income tax comprises falls compared with other taxes, the Chancellor can levy income tax on the very rich ever more lightly, at the same time loudly proclaiming their increasing share of the total income tax take.

Indeed, if almost all taxation were collected through VAT—something I fear might appeal to some Conservative Members—and we levied income tax only on millionaires, the very rich would pay all the income tax, just as they would if the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers managed to cream off almost all the nation's income. It would not prove that such a tax regime was good for the country or that it was compatible with any sense of social justice. It would say nothing about incentives, or about how hard or otherwise the very rich were working, or who deserved what. It would simply tell us that the distribution of income and taxation was very unfair, which is precisely the position that we are in now and were in before the Budget, with the top 10 per cent. keeping more income after tax than the bottom 50 per cent. of the country put together.

How much incentive do those people need? I have always been sceptical about the claims made for the incentive effects of tax cuts at high income levels. We hear those claims trotted out every time a Tory Chancellor gives a tax break to the very rich. If the Government believe that they will receive a proportionate increase in effort for each of the cuts that the Government have brought in, those in receipt of the highest incomes must have been doing less than nothing to earn their already generous salaries when the Government started. Besides, we are always told that those high salaries were necessary in the past precisely because taxation was so high. I wonder how many people have been awarding themselves compensatory pay cuts because their taxes have fallen.

Let us suppose that there is something in the incentives argument and that all the richest income earners are precisely as calculating as the Government suppose. It is clear that any rational assessment of that incentive argument needs to distinguish between marginal and average rates of taxation. I have not heard Conservative Members agreeing to that.

Given that there are good grounds for supposing that, one will have an opposite effect to the other, if indeed there is any effect to be had. If average rates of taxation fall, people will have more money for the same work and could easily afford to give up an hour for leisure. At least some of our highly paid directors, being rational, cost-sensitive, market-orientated people, will work less. On the other hand, if marginal tax rates fall, the cost of that extra hour of leisure is increased in terms of income and the calculating director will work harder.

If Conservative Members wish to construct an argument about incentives, they must consider the tax changes in relation to marginal and average tax rates.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Andrew Smith: No, I shall not give way.

For the very rich at least, the Chancellor has cut both average and marginal tax rates. He has thereby condemned the very rich and highly paid to sleepless nights with their calculators working out whether the higher amount that they can earn from an extra hour's work more than offsets the greater leisure that they can afford from their higher income from doing no work. That is nonsense, and so is the incentive argument at those levels of income.

8.30 pm

The fact is that the Chancellor could have eased the burden of that difficult calculation on the very rich by banging up their average tax rate even as he cut the marginal rate by reducing the real value of their allowances. For example, he could have made the personal allowances for the highly paid the same as for basic rate payers. He could have limited mortgage rate relief to the basic rate. However, the fact that he chose not to do that reveals a disdain for the real theory of incentives equalled only by his disregard for elementary social justice.

The Government had better be more careful about their use of international comparisons. Those comparisons, show that the cuts in higher rate taxes in Australia and even in the United States have been accompanied by closing tax loopholes and hitting fringe benefits harder. In contrast, the cuts in this country have been accompanied by larger tax breaks in personal equity plans and the business expansion scheme with more new opportunities in

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the Budget through the increase in the capital gains allowance for a married couple and the extension of the business expansion scheme to private rented housing.

Taken with the continuing generosity of tax reliefs on pension contributions and mortgage interest relief for higher rate taxpayers, those breaks dwarf into insignificance the changes that were made with regard to forestry and company cars. They leave this country with some of the biggest loopholes as well as the most generous taxes for the very rich. International comparisons merely highlight the particular injustices of the tax changes. They similarly highlight the manifest injustices and nonsense of the Chancellor's decision not to alter the way in which national insurance operates. It is especially and appallingly unfair that the lowest paid should pay more in national insurance than in income tax and are subjected to wholly unjustifiable and indefensible marginal rates of taxation.

Indeed, the increasing burden of national insurance rates imposed by this Government is in no small part responsible for the fall in the share of post-tax income going to the lowest 50 per cent. of income earners whose share of total incomes has fallen from 26·2 per cent. in 1978-79 to 24·9 per cent. in 1984-85.

Moreover, notwithstanding all the Chancellor's claims to have simplified taxation so much, national insurance also interacts with the income tax system to produce changes in marginal rates higher up the income scale for which there is neither rhyme nor reason. What on earth is the justification for allowing the effective marginal rate of taxation to fall from 34 per cent. to 25 per cent. at the national insurance upper threshold of £15,860? There is no reason for that.

The fact is that even before this Budget the rich were doing better relative to the average than they had done for the past 80 years. At the same time, the poorest one fifth of manual workers have fallen further below the average in income terms than at any time since records started being collected in 1886. The huge higher tax cuts in the Bill are totally without justice or justification. The Government are gratuitously rewarding the rich just as they are penalising the poor. They are doing nothing to lighten the total tax burden on the average income earner which we emphasise has continued to rise. Moreover, I believe that this Finance Bill will rebound on the Government politically as more people realise that it is nothing more than legislation in the interests of the very rich at the expense of everyone else.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): If the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) believes that the Budget will cause unease on the Conservative Benches in its economic consequences, he is even more out of touch with reality than the rest of his speech betrayed him to be in his understanding of ordinary human nature and incentives.

Mr. Hind: Unlike his predecessor.

Mr. Howarth: Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) has said, his predecessor never fell into that trap. I hope that the hon. Member for Oxford, East understands reality because, if he does not, his predecessor may be back in this place. He would be most welcome on the Conservative Benches.

The most important point to understand about the Budget is that it is enacting a long-standing principle to which the Conservative party has been wedded from the outset—to reduce the burden of taxation on every level of income. That is what this Budget seeks to do.

I strongly welcome the tax changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I encouraged him to continue the progress to reduce the basic rate of taxation from the inherited 33p in the pound all the way down to 25p. I would not suggest that mine was the only voice to which the Chancellor listened, but I am happy to say that mine was one of those to which he listened. It was the overwhelming view on the Conservative Benches that progress towards reducing the basic rate of taxation should continue.

I also warmly welcome the reduction in the top rate of taxation from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent. I am delighted that that begins to bring us into line—as I am sure that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) who has just arrived in the Chamber will realise—with the USSR, a country and a system with which the hon. Gentleman has a great deal of sympathy.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Crowther. The hon. Gentleman has said that I have a great deal of sympathy with the Soviet Union. I ask for your protection on the basis that I am one of the most active people in the Labour movement constantly protesting against the violation of human rights and the abuses that occur in the Soviet Union. I shall continue to protest about those matters. Will you request the hon. Gentleman, if he is an hon. Gentleman, to withdraw his remarks immediately?

The Temporary Chairman: In the first place, I do not believe that that is a point of order. In the second place, I do not believe that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) needs my protection, as he is perfectly capable of defending himself. In the third place, I do not think that there was anything unparliamentary in what was said.

Mr. Howarth: In the interests of the Committee, I should be happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that I am delighted to have his assurance on that point. However, every time that the hon. Gentleman speaks in the House of Commons, one gets the strong impression that he is very sympathetic towards the draconian systems that apply in that part of the world. I know that he will have plenty of opportunities to disabuse us on that in future.

Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have argued that there is nothing moral or worthy in high taxation. We have heard Opposition Members arguing tonight and previously that somehow they have a monopoly on morality and that Conservative Members are concerned only with economic gain and the theory of "get rich quick". That was the essence of the case made by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman. I am glad to see that the Opposition Members are nodding agreement. Conservative Members utterly reject that.

What we are trying to do with the basic rate and the high rate of taxation is completely moral. There is no morality in trying to impose draconian taxation on our people. There are two practical effects of such taxation. It leads to far greater evasion and a growth in the black economy. Indeed, the black economy is now entrenched in our culture and it is taking many years to wean the nation away from it.

Reference has been made tonight to the brain drain. Most people in this country have forgotten what happened in the 1960s, when many talented people left these shores to seek a more conducive economic climate in which to live, free from the shackles of Socialism and the nanny state which Socialism brought with it. If the hon. Member for Oxford, East wants evidence of the incentive effect of reducing taxation, I invite him to read an article in the *Financial Times*. Perhaps it is not the most Tory of newspapers but, even so, it said that the tax changes were likely to make Britain an even more attractive place in which companies and individuals could do business. It commented:

"Headhunting agencies and accountants expect a keener response when they try to entice overseas executives to work in the UK . . . the new tax structure could also reduce the number of top earners leaving for more profitable shores such as Singapore, Hong Kong and the Middle East, where tax is minimal."

The hon. Gentleman may reject that suggestion as being merely an attempt to attract jobs to the City. However, increasingly we find that in the world of financial services, one can carry on business at any of a number of financial centres throughout the world. It is greatly to the credit of the Government that Britain's pre-eminent position in the financial world has been maintained as a result of the taxation policies that they have pursued, to ensure not only that the City of London is a good and efficient place in which to do business but also that the United Kingdom is a country worth living in and in which one does not have to pay penal rates of tax.

I say to the hon. Member for Oxford, East and his colleagues that if, heaven forbid, the Labour party were ever to return to power, saddled and burdened with the policies of the 1960s and 1970s which Labour has yet to shake off, it will find a flight not only of capital before it can reimpose exchange controls but also of talent. It will inherit a barren land.

It is only on the effective management of this nation's overall economy that the success of the past nine years has been built. That success is not entirely the doing of the Government, because they can only create the right framework and climate. It is the people of this country who have affected that economic revolution. Power has returned to the people, who have decisively rejected all the policies of Opposition parties of varying descriptions.

What concerns me in this debate is the thinly disguised contempt of some Opposition Members for success. I refer to the sneering way in which the hon. Member for Walsall, North, who is a neighbour of mine, referred to the "rich". It serves as a word of utter abuse in his vocabulary. It is as though the Opposition do not want people to be successful or to be rich.

Indeed, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), with a note of contempt in his voice, spoke at the Dispatch Box of how the savings made as a result of the tax cuts might be spent on boats. I sought to intervene, and apparently caused amusement on the Opposition Benches by mentioning that the business of one of my constituents, who employs 150 of my constituents in building power boats in the middle of England, had increased 50 per cent. in the past year. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who is no longer in his place, built on my remarks by commenting that the south coast boat-building industry has also enjoyed an enormous boost.

The Opposition do not like the fact that people are choosing to spend their money on boats rather than in ways that the Opposition would like. However, expenditure on boats is directly generating jobs. It is disgraceful of the Opposition to attack a business which, I remind Opposition Members, is not subsidised by the taxpayer—unlike, on a bigger scale, the shipbuilding industry.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend not find it astonishing that the Opposition have so little faith in the capacity of British industry to produce what the consumer wants and believe that every time there is a tax cut people will spend their money on foreign goods? The CBI survey clearly shows that British-made goods are taking a larger share of people'sextra money—as is the case in the boat-building industry mentioned by my hon. Friend.

8.45 pm

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is right. At the heart of this debate is the dislike of Opposition Members for the power of the market place, which is anathema to Socialism. Opposition Members do not like people making their own decisions and choices because the basis of the system which they espouse, and which has been so decisively rejected by the people of this country, is one in which money is taken compulsorily from the people and redirected not according to where the public think fit but where Opposition Members think fit.

Mr. Winnick: As the hon. Gentleman has an almost obsessive interest in bringing me into his speech, and as our constituencies are indeed adjoining, may I ask how many of the hon. Gentleman's constituents have lost out in housing benefit, and how many more would have lost out had it not been for public pressure and the strong opposition of Labour Members of Parliament, which forced the Government to climb down?

Mr. Howarth: Of course some of my constituents have been adversely affected by the reduction in housing benefit, but that is because, as in so many other instances, the Government have grasped the nettle of a very difficult problem. We not only introduced housing benefit, but it increased fourfold under the present Government. Even by the hon. Gentleman's criteria, this Government score. I shall not entertain any lecturing from him.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I had better not give way because I know that others of my hon. Friends wish to contribute to the debate.

Further to what was said about consumer choice, it is a fact that, as a result of people having more money in their pockets, they are more willing to give to charity. Every Opposition Member will have in his or her constituency a worthy charity. That industry is now worth £13 billion per year.

Mr. John Smith: Charity is not an industry.

Mr. Howarth: It is an industry in the sense that it is an area of activity. I use the word in that sense. The average spending on charities per household is now £70 per year, which is an increase of 74 per cent. in real terms since 1980. That indicates that if one gives people choice, they know

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how to spend money far more effectively than Governments ever will. The public are much clearer in their minds as to what is deserving and what is not.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) *rose——*

Mr. Howarth: I did not give way to my hon. Friend and I want to close now, because I know other hon. Members wish to speak.

These proposals demonstrate the Government's continuing commitment to do all they can to create the right framework in which our economy can be revitalised. We have seen record spending on those in need. We have helped the entrepreneurs and the wealth creators, without whom we would have no public services in this country. We have helped, as was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), middle management, those who want the opportunity to build up capital—an opportunity that was denied to them by the Labour Government—and those on the basic rate of taxation. Furthermore, in this Budget we have taken another 750,000 people out of taxation.

I can do no better than cite the words of a foreign newspaper, the *Wall Street Journal*, which made what I believe to be the right response to this Budget when it commented:

"The winners will be the British people, at all levels of income, and in all regions of the country."

Mr. Worthington: We believe that there should be a progressive taxation system and that we do not have one. Even the formal system of income tax, with a range of 25 to 40 per cent., is far too narrow. Conservative Members have failed to demonstrate that the tax cuts given to higher earners have fuelled any economic growth. It has constantly been said that cutting taxation rates has generated, more income. What Conservative Members have failed to point out, although it was partly pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), is that people on tax rates above 60 per cent. largely set their own incomes, deciding what to pay themselves. A consequence of that can be seen from any financial report of recent years. Those are the people who have received the most massive increases in salary or other payments.

There is another factor to be taken into account. The top 5 per cent. of income tax payers, who, it is said, have now generated more income, are not composed only of those who were paying rates of above 60 per cent. It includes many who have moved into the group paying between 40 and 60 per cent.—the group whose tax rate is now to be reduced to 40 per cent. It is simply not true to say that the same people are now paying more tax because of the changes.

There has been no proof of a link between income tax cuts and economic growth. Other factors have been neglected, such as privatisation, North sea oil and the role of consumer debt in fuelling economic growth. Interestingly, I cannot find a Conservative Member who is willing to say how much he has gained from the Budget, and what he has done with the extra money. Conservative Members will not say, first, because they wish to conceal it—that is a tradition—and, secondly, because, in many instances, they have not thought about it. I have enough respect for the higher earners on the Conservative Benches to think that they do not know how much they have gained. They have not worked it out, or decided what to do with it. They certainly will not go around looking for a means of risking their money. It has gone into their portfolios. It will be going into stocks and shares in this country as a standard investment, and will not be involved in the generation of the country's wealth.

The Government talk about incentives for the elite. I was struck by what was said earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). He talked about 1 per cent. having obtained 31 per cent. of the tax benefits of the Budget, and said that that 1 per cent. represented about 200,000 households. Those people are already in a position to set their own incomes and incentives.

In last week's Second Reading debate, there was an objection when one of my hon. Friends said that the top 1 per cent. had hijacked their companies. There is a real sense in which the top 1 per cent.—whether in a firm, among National Health Service consultants or among lawyers—can set their own wages, and those of their own kind. They have already decided what they are worth.

I share the feeling of many Opposition Members about the obscenity of many firms' judgment about what their top executives or consultants are worth. They set expenses at absurdly high levels to profit from them. They set up their own private health schemes, frequently at the firm's expense.Their children's education is subsidised by the Exchequer to lower their tax burdens. Despite this Budget, their transport is still subsidised by the state. Their entertainment and their days out are subsidised as expenses.

I hope that all the boats that have been referred to are being paid for by individuals, and that the firms are benefiting. I suggest, however, that a good many are likely to have been bought by firms for their senior workers and dealt with on that basis.

Mr. Hind *rose——*

Mr. Worthington: I shall not give way at this stage.

Pensions are subsidised, and it is arranged for them to be non-contributory. Compensation for anything that may happen to employees is arranged in the form of handshakes. In an untargeted way, they receive mortgage interest relief not on the basis of need but as of right. They have access to cheap credit. They set own performance rewards, and their own shares are purchased for them.

Those are the realities. The top 1 per cent. are already controlling their economy and their assets; then they get the Chancellor to give them the icing on the cake. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East pointed out a few weeks ago, it is not impossible in this country to have an income of £1 million a year and pay no tax whatever because of the schemes set up by the Government. Every shift that the Government have made in the taxation system has benefited them, and no research has been undertaken to demonstrate the worth of that to the country.

I was struck by the Financial Secretary's statement last week that redistribution had been chosen, used and thrown away, because it did not work. We are entering, very seriously, the era of redistribution of income, but it is

redistribution from poor to rich rather than the other way round. The Government have achieved a scale of social engineering that has never been attempted before.

In none of the spheres that I have mentioned is there any talk of targeting and need: it is just give. The move is all towards a more regressive system. The poll tax is an example, in that those who are most well off will pay least. We also know that the poll tax will substantially increase property prices, so that in the more prosperous areas a house that would have sold previously at £200,000 is likely to increase in price by about 10 per cent., or £20,000. Another gift of capital is provided by that regressive tax system.

Two things happen to the people who benefit from this. First, they believe that they deserve the money that they earn—that they have unique talents, which are curiously invisible to the rest of us. Throughout my life I have looked for those unique talents in the captains of industry, and have found myself curiously disappointed. Secondly, they suffer from an immense poverty of imagination about the life being led in the rest of the country, the life that must be led by those who have not much money. Someone who feels that he can spend £50 on a meal finds it impossible to imagine what it is like to have £50 as a weekly income.

Conservative Members have constantly described the present Government as a tax-cutting Government, but nothing could be further from the truth. Even the Government are forced to admit that on occasion. What they are talking about is tax cuts for those on the higher income levels. We know that in 1987-88 taxes formed 37·9 per cent. of GDP, and that in 1978-79 the share was 33·9 per cent.

In 1978-79 a one-earner couple on average earnings with two children paid 23·5 per cent. of their income in income tax, national insurance contribution and VAT. In 1988-89 the figure will have risen to 25·1 per cent. for that typical family.

9 pm

The tax rates for people at the other end of the scale have gone up dramatically. My hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and for Oxford, East have spoken about that, so I shall not go into great detail. However, in the past eight years council house rents in Scotland have increased by 198 per cent. One might argue that there is a housing benefit system for those people, but fairly typical people in my constituency are getting a £2·50 increase in their pensions of which they lose about 91 per cent. because of the cuts in housing benefit.

Effectively, those at the lower end of the scale are being taxed at a much higher rate than they previously had to suffer. Therefore, particularly among poorer people, there is a mounting degree of personal debt. I hope that we can look at that problem in more detail in Standing Committee. There is certainly concern in Scotland in terms of the inquiries to the citizens advice bureaux in the past few years.

In 1983-84 there were 13,000 cases of consumer debt. By 1986-87 there were 42,000 such cases. I do not wish to make a party political point, but I feel that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee should take much more seriously the issue of consumer debt. All political parties must try to find a cheaper way of financing credit for those on average and below average incomes.

The only examples I know of that work are the credit unions which curiously have been neglected in this country compared with the United States of America or Ireland. Credit unions are formed where there is a common bond between people in a neighbourhood or people who work together. They form savings unions and grant each other credit. Some of the most successful credit unions in this country involve people who work in the transport industry, in taxis or in the police force.

In my constituency, the Dalmuir credit union, which has 1,900 active members, lent £300,000 last year. Ordinary people lent £300,000 last year and over a 10-year period they have lent £1 million. The interest rate is such that, if one borrowed £100 now, one would have to pay back £106·25 in a year's time. That contrasts with the interest rates that one would have to pay in other circumstances. In that £1 million they had £19,000 of bad debts—less than 2 per cent. That is staggering.

One case that came to the union's attention last week involved a woman whose marriage had broken down. She had more than £2,000 in debt and was paying firms £290 per month. That was reduced to £100 a month by using the credit union.

Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee should be much more concerned about the mounting misery that is being caused by intolerable levels of personal debt. They should be seeking to get people out of the grip of a financial system which, frankly, crucifies them. I hope that hon. Members will consider this matter. I mention it because absurdly, at the present time, credit unions are stuck with a credit limit of £2,000. It would be of no cost to the Exchequer to allow them a more generous credit limit. For example, if a taxi driver wished to buy his cab, £2,000 would go nowhere near financing the purchase. We should consider adding a new clause to the Bill which would allow more generous credit limits for credit unions.

In summary, a point that I want to make with some force is that we must stop talking about Britain's taxation system having a progressive element. We cannot do that any more because when we look at the combination of taxation and benefit systems we find that we have a highly regressive tax system, a review of which is long overdue.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): If I were to ask any of my constituents how they felt about the Government's tax cut policy, I am convinced that they would willingly support it, as they did in 1983, and again in 1987. I prefer to tell them that the Government have just given them not 2p in the pound off their income tax, but 8p in the pound, which amounts to a great deal to the average British worker.

I cannot understand any political party saying that that is a bad thing. Nurses, car workers and many other members of our society who do middle to low-paid jobs have benefited substantially since 1979 from a reduction in taxation. It is morally indefensible to say that that is a bad thing and that we are immoral to introduce such a policy.

Of course, we understand that by following a policy of tax reduction we are taking away one of the basic tools of Socialism, which is to tax people and to redistribute it according to the priorities of that political party. It is the party that decides who to bestow its largesse upon.

Reductions in income tax merely increase the desire to work. One of the problems within our community is the

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black economy: the pound in the back pocket rather than the pound earned honestly. A policy of lower and lower direct taxation must be the way forward.

Cuts at the top end are not necessarily beneficial only to those who are earning large sums of money—the so-called Ralph Halperns of this world. It does not matter very much to them, but it is a clear sign to all those hard-working members of our society that monetary awards are available. They have a target to achieve. That is what we have set out to achieve in our community and the investment and dynamism now prevalent in our economy is proof for all that our policies are right.

Those at the top end of the salary scale in the bad old days of the Labour Government were taking their rewards in fiddles, in tax perks, in cars, in houses and all the other things that we knew were wrong or immoral. Now, as a result of our tax cuts, more and more are taking their reward, as it should be, in monetary remuneration. That is the only sensible way of rewarding people.

The Labour party encourages the fiddle society—the people who believe that the only way to prosper is to try to fiddle the tax man because they do not want to pay the ever more penal rates of tax levied upon them. That is the policy of the Labour party.

The Labour Government set an immense track record. They created the selective employment tax to get more taxation out of people. When that did not work, they created the national insurance surcharge, a payroll tax which destroyed hundreds of thousands of jobs in Britain in one fell swoop. That is another tax that we have cut. Surely Labour Members are not saying that our action in cutting that tax is immoral.

Twenty-five million people have a great deal to thank the Government for in the reduction of taxes. The 40 per cent. element is a guiding light for those who want to attain prosperity within our community. It can now be achieved much earlier.

We can see that our taxation policy is proving successful, nowhere more so than in the west midlands. We have a regional newspaper which last year published 26 pages of job advertisements. Last Thursday there were 32 pages of job advertisements. The opportunities for people to take up employment now are as never before. As one looks around, one can see the investment going into our cities and manufacturing processes.

It has been said that we do not have the same investment that we had in 1979. One has to look back over the few years before 1979 to get a direct comparison. I maintain that investment in British industry has never been higher year by year as an on-going process. Those of us who visit our factories and our industries can see the amount of investment that has gone into them; and as our economy expands, so we have more resources for health and social services.

On the doorstep in the local election campaigns the message has been coming back loud and clear that people understand what we are doing with our economy and in creating the real wealth. They understand the incentives that we have introduced for people to work and get a fair reward for their work. They also understand the direct connection between the wealth-creating process and the ability to spend on our national services in health, welfare and housing and in our cities. They understand that, without the incentives that we have continued to provide over the last eight or nine years, none of the things that we want to achieve as a society can be achieved.

I said to a number of people on the doorstep who felt that they were already getting enough in their back pocket or in their wage packet that, if they wanted to decline their tax cuts, they could do so. The system that we have sets a minimum amount of tax that has to be paid, and I told them that if they wanted to pay more they should by all means make the necessary arrangements with the Inland Revenue.

I believe that the Government are well on course towards achieving the sort of community, society and prosperity that we want, and I applaud their progress.

Mr. Morgan: It is clear that most Government Members have a very strong belief in the causal relationship between lower taxation and higher economic growth. They may not know what the causal relationship is, but they certainly have a powerful religious fetishist belief that there is such a relationship.

If they really believe that this relationship holds good at all levels of taxation, they will be voting against the Government tonight, because they will believe that the Chancellor should have cut the tax rates not to 40p and 25p but to, say, 25p and 15p and that the only reason why the Chancellor did not cut tax much more was that he was worried about the wall of money that would hit him from the higher tax receipts that he would get. After all, if the belief is exactly as we have had it put to us by Government Members throughout this debate—that lower taxes mean higher tax revenue—why is it 40p and 25p? Why was not tax cut this year to a much lower figure?

I presume that Government Members do not believe that if tax was cut to zero one would get more revenue. Nobody has produced any calculations that indicate that if taxation were cut to the utmost, to 0·1 per cent., that would maximise and optimise the tax revenue. Unfortunately, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would not know what to do with all the extra money that he would get if he cut the taxes by twice as much, so he has got it dead right, they think.

All that Government Members have told us is that they are party loyalists. It does not matter what the level of taxation is; whatever the Chancellor said it would be in the Budget must be the right level. It is not the wall of money that I have referred to as the fear in the Chancellor's mind that is the major problem, but the way that his lower taxes have pushed him into a corner as regards the macroeconomic effect of lower taxation. If he had not skewed the economy so badly by cutting the top rates so sharply and cutting the basic rate modestly, he would now have much greater room for manoeuvre and ability to play around with interest and exchange rates. He has run out of options as regards the balance of payments and the general macroeconomic effects of the economy. The overall level of taxation has now become skewed.

This has not prevented the dyed-in-the-wool monetarists working at No. 10 Downing street behind the Prime Minister from crawling out of the woodwork and attacking the growth path which the economy was set upon two and a half years ago. The economy took a sharp upturn two and a half years ago and it had nothing to do with lower taxes; it had to do with low exchange rates, low energy costs, holding back energy price increases—which have been made since the election—and taking the attitude

that at least until the general election the economy would be pushed on to a growth path by means of the greater competitiveness provided by lower exchange rates.

Then the worry started to come from the Treasury, from the gurus behind the Prime Minister, and from Professor Brian Griffiths and others. They said, "We do not like this growthmanship. It will lead to a reversion to trade union militancy. We shall find out whether we really have demonstrated that all the so-called sacrifices of the period 1979-81 really work." With such worries, they have started to emerge and say, "Now the economy is over-heating; we must turn it down."

9.15 pm

The Chancellor has weakened his ability to resist the loonies from No. 10 Downing street, and the think tanks that advise the Prime Minister have caused her to come out into the open and split Government economic policy wide open in the past two to three weeks. If the Chancellor had been less skewed in his attitude towards high rate tax cuts, he would still have had a few options open to him. He would still have been able to demonstrate to the financial community in London and elsewhere that we did not want the wall of money that has hit the country and sent the exchange rate soaring since the Budget.

That wall of money worries Opposition Members. It is a direct consequence of the low tax rates that were introduced in the Budget. They have severely weakened the Chancellor of the Exchequer's position and his ability to resist the monetarist maniacs who, once again, have attempted——

Mr. Carrington: It is widely assumed that foreign investment in this country comes from high interest rates and not from low tax rates. I do not think that there is a causal relationship between high interest rates and foreign investment, but I have not heard anybody expound the theory that low personal tax rates encourage foreign investment.

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. He is perfectly right. There is no direct interrelationship between low tax rates and the wall of money. The wall of money has hit this country and has sent the exchange rate soaring because of the indirect effects of low tax rates. Low tax rates caused concern in the City because they were not tight enough. That meant that the Chancellor has been unable to play the low interest rate card sufficiently strongly to keep away the wall of money.

I assume that the Chancellor agrees that we do not want to see exchange rates rise to the level that they have reached. I assume that he is with me in saying that, if we want to keep the economy on a growth path, we need to keep exchange rates at a reasonable competitive level with the deutschmark. I assume that he agrees that we want to see energy costs kept at a reasonable level. We do not want electricity prices to be increased by 9 per cent. with the 4·5 per cent. that the electricity industry wanted. We do not want to see gas prices going up as they have. We want to see modest utility costs that are comparable with those of competitor industries. We want to see interest rates at a level comparable with those in our main competitor countries. Low tax rates have meant that the Chancellor cannot play that interest rate card at the moment. He has modestly reduced interest rates, but he has been unable to keep away the wall of money.

What is more, we now have two simultaneous economic policies—one run by the Prime Minister, and one run by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That is extremely damaging for British industry. I do not know where she got the idea, but the Prime Minister has heard that it is good to have two economic policies. I have heard that she may have got the idea from China. Perhaps it is the benefits of competition. The Chinese Government say that, when they take over Hong Kong, it will be proper to have one Government and two economic policies.

Is that what we shall have? Industry does not like that idea. It regards it as a complete abortion to have lack of clarity about the main purpose of the Government's exchange rate and interest rate policy. Is it to keep industry producing the goods? If it is not, we shall be in serious balance of payments trouble by the end of the year. It may be intended to cane workers who are again demonstrating early signs of militancy.

The London financial community thinks that it is extremely worrying. If hon. Members read their stockbrokers' circulars, as I am sure they do, they will have seen that there is concern that trade union militancy is rising at twice the level of unemployment of 10 or 15 years ago. So much for the great Thatcher revolution, as it is known. So much for the great supply revolution. The Phillips curve is now double the employment level of 10 years ago. Is that a great achievement? That is what the stockbroker circulars are saying.

Having sold the pass by skewing the economy in the direction of high priced imports by massive cuts in the higher rates of taxation, the Chancellor is in real difficulties. That must be worrying to anyone who has at heart the long-term interest of industry. The Prime Minister said that one cannot buck the market. The Chancellor thinks that by a policy of managed currency floating and a form of deutschmark shadowing, it is possible at least to assuage the market in order to obtain a relationship inwhich British industry can work. Industry will, therefore, know that if the currency rises it will not rise by more than the deutschmark.

All that has gone out of the window because the Chancellor found himself caught in the religious fetish of low personal income tax rates. He cut them to a rate that is too low to allow him freedom of movement in cutting interest rates, which was what was needed in order to correct the balance of payment problems that are looming on the skyline as we move towards a probable figure of £7 billion to £8 billion for our balance of trade deficit. That is the projection in the Red Book for the current financial year.

There is sectoral overheating in the economy. It has not yet emerged in retail prices index inflation, because it is mostly in the form of asset price inflation. We have seen it occurring in certain sectors of the economy, because the economy has become skewed towards the financial community in the south-east of England and the activities of the building industry.

Inflation in the building industry is moving rapidly upwards. I had an example in my constituency recently. We have been encouraged to become involved in charitable projects and recently I was involved in fund raising for a building project. The quantity surveyor's estimate for the project was £150,000. There was no delay between the quantity surveyor's estimate and the building tenders, but the lowest building tender was £225,000. That

[Mr. Morgan]

is 50 per cent. inflation. That kind of asset price inflation is caused by this skewing of the economy, which in turn is caused by reducing too much the top rate taxes.

We emphasise—I hope that there would be some support for this on the Government Back Benches—the long-term interest of rebuilding productive capacity in this country to take the place of North sea oil. Anything which merely causes the import of expensive luxury goods cannot be good for this country. We are already in a severe balance of payments crisis. We are consuming far more than we produce. That cannot be healthy. Our priority must be to invest in manufacturing industry and in research and development. We must lay emphasis on industrial training. We are training far fewer skilled workers than our main competitor countries, such as Italy, France and Germany.

If anyone were to ask British industry what it regards as the most important priority, not just for this year's Budget, but for the next two or three Budgets, it would say that there should be a clear policy from the Government as to where they are leading this country, as we move out of the North sea era and back to normality. When there is no windfall from the North sea, we will have to earn our living. As that problem becomes greater for us, we must revert to a policy whereby the taxation system, the interest rate system and the exhange rate policy of the Government are unified in order to make this country more productive, with its consumption and production in balance.

We appeal to the Chancellor and the Prime Minister to come together to resolve their apparently irreconcilable position on the exchange rate and on managed floating against free rising currencies. That penalises workers, who are beginning to show greater balance between supply and demand for labour, which is having an impact on trade unions and wage bargaining. If Molotov and Ribbentrop could sign a pact, surely the Prime Minister and the Chancellor can do the same.

The Chancellor should not feel beleaguered. He should not be subject to finger-wagging in the Conservative Lobby or have to tell the world through magazines that his favourtie Shakespearian play is "The Taming of the Shrew." This policy will not give industry confidence to invest for the future to produce the goods that this country wants. It will not reduce unemployment to a level at which the Government will be able to say that social security payments can be reduced because unemployment has decreased and the country is productive again.

Mr. John Townend: The debate is drawing to a close, so I shall deal specifically with clauses 22 and 23.

I support these clauses, first, on the grounds of principle, and, secondly, on economic grounds. Penal levies of personal taxation, as practised by the last Labour Government, are immoral. To take 98p in the pound from any recipient is equivalent to confiscation. To take 83p in the pound from the salaries of executives, entrepreneurs and sportsmen is a disincentive. It cannot be justified on economic grounds. The only basis for it is that of envy and prosecuting the so-called class war.

What was the effect of those penal rates of taxation? A growing number of people did not pay those rates and under-declared their income. We saw the growth of the black economy. The Labour Government turned an honest country into one of tax fiddlers. Those who were not dishonest avoided the higher rates of taxation by legal means, such as by employing armies of lawyers and accountants, who converted income into capital. No hon. Member has mentioned the fact that this Government have increased the capital gains tax rate for higher tax earners from 30 to 40 per cent., thus doing away with the artificial methods of paying tax.

The penal rates of tax resulted in a growth in perks. It was ridiculous that successful export sales managers were given, not an increase in salary, but a better car. If that was not a sufficient incentive, they simply left the country and became tax exiles. What greater condemnation can there be of the Labour Government than that they drove out some of the country's best brains, top doctors, sportsmen, business men, bankers, dancers, and pop stars? At the end of the day, those high rates of tax reduced the amount of tax that was paid.

In 1979 the in-coming Conservative Government couragously sliced the top rate of tax to 60 per cent. What has been the result? More revenue has been raised by taxes and there has been a resurgence in enterprise. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with even greater courage in his first Budget after the election, reduced the top level of tax to 40 per cent. We now have an enterprise culture for the first time in 50 years.

The wealthy, the talented and the tax exiles will start to drift back. A tremendous boost is being given to the United Kingdom. It is becoming a place where international companies are establishing their headquarters. The reputation of the City as a financial centre will be reinforced. Indeed, it is already the financial centre of Europe.

There has been a reduction of 8p in the basic rate since the Government took office, and we are committed to reducing it further. I am amazed when Opposition Members oppose reductions in the basic rate. They talk about the high level of national insurance. Under the last Labour Government the basic rate was 35 per cent., plus 9 per cent. national insurance, making a total of 44p in the pound. Is it what the man on average earnings should be paying as a marginal rate?

Reducing taxation is popular and it signifies the difference in principle between our party and the Labour party. We believe that people should be allowed to keep money and spend it as they wish, whereas Opposition Members believe in taking more and more of an individual's income and spending it as they think best. To the Labour party, the man in Whitehall knows best. To us, the individual knows best.

9.30 pm

Mr. John Smith: The contribution of the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) was useful because it illustrated to the Committee the psychology that pervades the Conservative Benches. To hear the hon. Gentleman speak, one would think that a high rate of personal income tax, such as existed under the previous Labour Government and, indeed, under previous Conservative Governments, constituted a positive obligation to act illegally and that people were entitled to avoid the law, to cheat, and to be dishonest because of high rates of taxation —*[Interruption.]* That was the whole burden of the hon. Gentleman's speech. He said that under high rates of tax——

Mr. John Townend: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I am not giving way until I have finished the indictment that I am fashioning for the hon. Gentleman. He argued that if we had high rates of tax, people broke the law. If that is so, we should prosecute those who break the law. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman that tax evasion has increased seven times since the Government came to office. The coincidence that he suggested does not exist, and, if there were such a coincidence, we should be doing something about it.

The hon. Gentleman argued that reductions in the top rates of income tax were necessarily a good thing for the country. That assertion has been at the heart of the debate. It has been convenient for us to consider clauses 22 and 23 together, although we shall have separate votes on them. Most of the debate has centred on the justification that Conservative Members have offered for the steep reductions in the higher rates of income tax. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) put it succinctly in his admirable contribution when he said that this Budget has effectively marked the end of progressive taxation in this country.

We now have only two rates of personal income tax —25 per cent. and 40 per cent. Historically—for most of the long period since the introduction of an income tax system, and certainly this century—this country has had a progressive principle embedded in its income tax system. Most countries—particularly the countries similar to ours —in the European Community still have the progressive principle embedded in their taxation system.

The progressive principle has been abandoned in this Budget on grounds of simplicity. It is not good enough to say that we should have only two rates because that is simpler. The question is whether it is fair to have only two rates. Is it fair that a person on a very modest income should have a marginal rate of tax of 34 per cent., when income tax and national insurance are taken together, while a person of unlimited income—an income of £2 million to £3 million a year—pays only 40 per cent.? That leaves a difference of only 6 per cent. between the two. We have almost eliminated the notion of progressive taxation.

Clearly, Conservative Members have not comprehended the progressive principle of taxation. It is a simple, equitable idea that if one has more resources one should pay proportionately more to the cost of running the community than those with rather meagre resources. Of course, the person who earns a larger salary will pay a larger total, even if he pays at the same rate, but that is not the progressive principle. The progressive principle is that the more one has and the broader one's back, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne put it, the more of the burden one should be capable of carrying and the more of the burden one should be willing to carry.

One may have been blessed with good fortune which has given one brains, talent, energy, good luck or inherited wealth. Privilege, as well as ability, can contribute to one's income. When one has that income, one should not want to get rid of one's obligations as the rich in this country almost seem to want to do; one should shoulder that obligation as part of one's citizenship and be proud of it. Fortunately, I think that is still the view of many people in this country. I detected a note of embarrassment, almost of shame, in some well-off people when they were told the results of the Budget for them.

Of course, the notion that somehow we can justify all this unfairness on the ground of its alleged incentive effect is the biggest and most bogus argument in the whole debate. Conservative Members have been striving to find evidence for the assertion. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), who is not in the Chamber now, did not bother with evidence; he asserted that it was just common sense. The hon. Gentleman's connection with common sense is usually coincidental so I shall not take what he says as reliable authority. One could assert equally well that it is a good argument for having high taxation because it would be an incentive to earn more to pay the tax. One proposition is as much common sense as the other.

One would need to look for empirical evidence to support the proposition that a huge incentive effect was created. We have heard about Professor Brown's study. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury knows perfectly well that it was commissioned by the Treasury. It cost £600,000 to carry out the study, yet the Chief Secretary tells us today that he has not even read this study, which is highly relevant to the major change proposed in the Budget. The Chief Secretary says that he has not even bothered to read it. He should now and again tear himself away from *Woman's Own*, which seems to be his favourite reading, and occasionally cast his eye over a Treasury paper. It would be more fitting to the responsibilities that he has to discharge to the Government and to Parliament.

What is said is that it does not really matter because my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) commissioned the study. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) is not so naive as some hon. Members. He does not necessarily believe what he is told by Ministers. He telephoned Professor Brown this afternoon to find out whether that was the case. Professor Brown confirmed that he was originally commissioned by the Treasury, under the Labour Government, but that his study did not begin until September 1979, some months after the Conservatives took office. Not only that, he was asked to do it for three years, and the period of study was extended twice. Therefore, the notion that this study was left lying for the Conservative Government by a previous Labour Administration, an impression that they were keen to create, is proved totally false by the facts.

The reason why the Conservatives are so embarrassed about Professor Brown's study is that it blows up the whole theory. It shows that many people cannot alter the amount and pace of their work, or the number of hours, and they cannot be much affected in an incentive direction. Now all that has been swept aside.

Another study was mentioned. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has dealt effectively enough with the mysterious Professor Lindsey, who is the favoured supporter of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. No doubt he will tell us in more detail of the clever studies on which we can rely.

Let us not fool ourselves with the notion that the Conservative Government believe all this nonsense about incentives. They do not. But they must say something to the public and to Parliament when they make these huge and unfair changes in taxation. Sometimes they tell us that we must target things cleverly, and that a lot of precise targeting has gone into social security benefits and changes in housing benefit. I do not notice very much targeting between the productive and unproductive rich. It does not

[Mr. Smith]

matter whether one is a highly paid industrialist or lying on one's backside in San Moritz, or Monte Carlo, or sunning oneself in the Caribbean. It makes no difference because there will be exactly the same amount of loot from the Budget. There is no such thing as targeting when it comes to spreading out benefits to the rich. But we have to target carefully every penny, every 5p and every pound when it goes to the needy, the poor and the disabled in this country.

What of the argument about inherited wealth, which is another feature of the Budget? We are not discussing this tonight, Sir Paul, but in passing I shall point out that the Government have reduced the rate of inheritance tax to 40 per cent. What kind of incentive is that? The only one that I can work out is an incentive to get rid of rich relatives earlier than one would otherwise wish. Indeed, it is an inventive to kill off relatives. That is the only sense that I can make of it. Surely a capital taxation has the opposite effect—it distinguishes the incentives. If we want to create incentive in the community, we should have heavier capital and inheritance taxes.

Mr. Hind: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that one of the major reasons for the alteration in inheritance tax was to give the opportunity to thousands of owners of small businesses, which have been built up and helped to attack our unemployment problems, to pass on their businesses and keep them within the family? The purpose of the alteration was to help the new entrepreneurs who have created the wealth of this country and whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman denigrates.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is typical of the Conservative party. Whenever we deal with inheritance taxation the small business man is always in mind. He knows perfectly well that the greatest benefit from inheritance taxation—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should listen to my answer. The greatest beneficiaries of inheritance tax are the large conglomerations of wealth that pass on relentlessly from one generation to another. That extinguishes every form of incentive in the people who receive those large amounts of money. We are driven to the conclusion that that tax has nothing to do with incentives, in either income or wealth; it is a deliberately unfair distribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East exposed that unfairness in a way that I hope the rest of the country will note with interest. In a parliamentary answer given to him by the Financial Secretary, who will reply to the debate, he was told that 1·1 per cent. of the taxpayers of a household will get more than 31 per cent. of the benefits of the Budget. Only 1 per cent. will get 30 per cent. of the benefits. Who could possibly justify that on any ground of fairness?

Certainly it cannot be justified when we are faced with social security cuts of a nature never seen before, when people are coming to see my hon. Friends and Conservative Members with panic in their voices. They describe the circumstances that they face with savage cuts in their income and no way in which they can do anything to replace that income. I hope that we shall not say to the retired, the disabled and the widowed that they should go out and work harder or some such rubbish when faced with a severe cut in their incomes.

Mr. Major: What about the basic rate?

Mr. Smith: I shall tell the right hon. Gentleman about the basic rate.

Hon. Members: Tell us about it now.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: No, I shall not give way.

We now have the poll tax coming at the end of it all —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): That has nothing to do with this debate.

Mr. Smith: It has a great deal to do with this Budget. It is the fundamental demonstration that the concept of fairness in taxation has been totally abandoned by the Conservative party.

We do not need two rates of tax—a so-called basic rate and a higher rate. We want, in common with all other countries that have sense and intelligence regarding taxation, a range of taxation starting lower than the present basic rate and finishing higher than the present higher level.

In conclusion, I wish to quote an article from the *Financial Times* of 19 March 1988. It was written by Mr. Michael Prowse—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen should listen to this because it is relevant to the debate. Mr. Prowse states:

"There is no long-run correlation between tax rates and economic growth. Japan has easily outperformed other industrial economies in recent decades and yet it has a highly progressive income tax."

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What about the Labour party?

Mr. Smith: All the squeaks in the world will not stop me from reading this particular document. The article continues:

"The top rate in 1979 was 93 per cent., little short of Britain, and the reduction since then, to 78 per cent., has been modest."

There is a top rate of tax of 78 per cent. in Japan, yet we are told that lower rates of tax are somehow an incentive to economic growth and efficiency.

We shall vote against these tax proposals tonight—both the standard rate and the higher rate changes—because we believe that the money should have been spent on the Health Service, on ensuring a decent social security system and decent public services in this country. Those were the needs that Britain required. Instead, this foolish and immoral Government have chosen to give a vast amount of money to 1 per cent. of the population. The Government do not represent the people of Britain in doing that. The Opposition will speak for them by voting against these proposals.

9.45 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) that this debate has sharply illustrated the considerable divide in the approach of the two parties. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has shown again that the Labour party is itching to put up tax rates

—and not only the higher rates. He devoted a great deal of time to telling us how the higher rates provided no incentive, but he gave no justification for his obvious desire and eagerness to put up the basic rate for 23 million people.

Hon. Members have missed the fact that a large part of the measures in the Budget have gone to help not only the super-rich, with whom Opposition Members seem obsessed, but the man on average earnings, who will gain £5 a week from them. For 23 million people the marginal rate of tax is the basic rate, against which the Opposition will vote. I wish they would make their position clear. During the election they told us that they were opposed to the cut from 29p to 27p in the pound. Now they are against the cut from 27p to 25p. What would they put the rate up to—27p or 29p?

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East complained that time and again my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary had quoted from *Woman's Own*. I do not want to quote from *Woman's Own*, but I had the pleasure of hearing the right hon. and learned Gentleman early in the morning on the "Today" programme on 30 September last year, when he said:

"We want to make sure that people under a Labour Government will feel relaxed and content and happy about being prosperous."

We, too, want them to be happy and content, and we also want to know what the basic rate of tax will rise to if there is a Labour Government.

These tax cuts need to be examined against the background of all the Budgets that went before this one, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) said. The Budget gives substantial tax cuts to people at the higher end of the scale—no one denies that —but that needs to be judged against what has happened in all the other Budgets.

This is the sixth Budget in succession in which we have reduced income tax, which is far more than could ever be said of a Labour Government. Many of the benefits of these cuts in taxation have gone to the lower paid. Over successive Budgets, those with incomes below £5,000 have had their tax cut by about 38 per cent. Those with incomes between £5,000 and £10,000 have had their income tax reduced by about 28 per cent. Wherever the right hon. and learned Gentleman stands on the questions that he dodged and refused to answer, it is clear from the Labour party's expenditure plans and record that if it ever returned to office there would be a crippling increase in taxation, not only for the higher paid, but for the average and lower paid, who paid for the excesses of the Labour party's overspending before.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The right hon. Gentleman is ducking the issue of incentives. Will he confirm that it is official Government thinking that people such as Sir Ralph Halpern, whose pre-Budget take-home pay was in excess of £500,000 a year, were not receiving enough incentives to work hard? Will he give us his estimate of whether Sir Ralph will break sweat now that his take-home pay has increased by £250,000 a year?

Mr. Lamont: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall deal with the question of management incentives. An incentive is needed for top management. I shall go into that in detail, but I want, first, to answer the point raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East on the various studies by Professor Brown and others. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) misrepresented a little, although not deliberately, my position on the studies by Professors Brown and Lindsey. I made it crystal clear that the Government do not, and never did, think that we need to wait until some academic study has been completed before we decide to cut taxes.

We made no commitment at the election that we would wait until Professor Brown had completed his study before we cut taxation. As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said, there are plenty of ways—and I shall demonstrate them—in which one can show that there are benefits to the economy from cutting taxes. I see that the right hon. Gentleman is consulting *Hansard*. I shall just remind him of what I said:

"The evidence is all around us. It is in the tax cuts that we made in 1979".—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 296.]

Those tax cuts have more than paid for themselves.

When the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East commented on the study by Professor Lindsey, he was not quite up-to-date. He said that Professor Lindsey merely found that, in the United States, some cuts in higher taxes had resulted in income being declared that would not otherwise have been declared. We have always made it clear that that is one of the effects of cutting higher rate taxes.

Opposition Members are shocked out of their wits about that, but it was not the only effect that Professor Lindsey had in mind. He went on to say that there would also be an effect from increased work effort. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that Professor Lindsey argues in his latest work that the combined impact of all those factors is to make it desirable to have a tax revenue maximising the rate of income tax at around 40 per cent. That may just be a coincidence.

It is a matter of judgment, but any tax rate of 50 per cent. or over will have a severe disincentive effect. It will give people every reason to want to shelter their income and will not be effective in encouraging management to come to this country. In a world in which all the top rates of tax are coming down, we were right to pitch our new rate of tax at the lower end, although there are many countries below us. A country such as ours, which needs to attract the best management talent from all over the world, should pitch tax rates at the lowest end.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East referred to Japan and said, "Well, of course, Japan has a progressive system of taxation which goes up to 65 per cent.," but he is out of date with Japan's new proposals. He does not know that the top rate of 60 per cent. starts at an income level of over £150,000.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: Why do the Government not do that?

Mr. Lamont: In Japan, on an income of £11,000, the rate is only 18 per cent., compared with a rate of 25 per cent. in this country. The hon. Gentleman says that we could do that, but if, instead of cutting the rates, we has increased the thresholds at which the higher rates become payable, we know that Opposition Members would have said exactly what they are saying now, that it is a Budget for the rich, and they would have opposed it just as much as they would have opposed the cuts in rates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) explained that we had reduced the rates of capital taxes as well as income tax and had

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increased revenue considerably. That has also been the effect on the top rates of income tax. As I said in an earlier debate which bore a little similarity to this one, whether we take the top 1, 2, 3 or 5 per cent., or all the higher rate taxpayers together, we see that today they are contributing a higher proportion of income tax revenues than they were in 1978-89. This reflects the increased dynamism and profitability of the British economy.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said that people have decided to pay themselves more. These mysterious people must be jolly lucky to be able to pay themselves more. The hon. Gentleman also said that the differentials were widening. There is bound to be an effect from the ending of pay controls, and rightly so. They were immensely damaging to our economy and management. I believe that widening differentials are good, quite apart from the fact that they have meant that more tax is being declared. There is no doubt that under the system of pay controls that existed under the previous Labour Government there was a lot of tax evasion, a great deal of remuneration by way of benefits in kind and ways to get round the pay controls.

We have also seen an increase in the number of self-employed in the top 5 per cent. of tax payers. Opposition Members will probably say that they are simply remunerating themselves more, because the Opposition have very little sympathy for the self-employed. However, Conservative Members know that if the self-employed are earning more that is because their businesses are doing better and creating more, and it is right that they should be rewarded.

Opposition Members wanted a rationale for the higher rate reductions. Another damaging effect of high marginal rates is that they obscure differentials between one job and another. They make it more difficult for management to move from one company to another, or from overseas back to this country because that is not worth while in post-tax terms.

One of the good points—not just because of our tax rates, but because our economy has improved so much—is that we have seen some of the leading companies attracting chief executives from all around the world to work here because this is a good competitive economy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) said, tax cuts enable managers to build up capital. We need managers, not only to work for large companies, but to go out and found new businesses and work on their own.

One of the best things to happen in this country over the past few years has been the increase in the number of people leaving big business to start up new businesses. We have seen considerable growth in the venture capital industry, which last year raised £750 million for small businesses. This industry is second only to that in the United States, and it is bigger than any other in Europe.

Although we listened to Opposition Members, we learned nothing about what they propose to do about tax. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would not tell us what the Opposition plan for the basic rate of tax. We know that they intend to abolish the married man's allowance, thus making 11 million couples more than £7 a week worse off. They want to abolish the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions, so putting up the marginal rate for 2 million basic ratepayers by nine percentage points.

We do not know what the Opposition want to do with the higher rates. A report appeared in *The Times*, which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not deny, that the Opposition would put the top rate up to 50 per cent. If that is so, their objection to our proposal is merely one of degree and their indignation is hypocritical and synthetic. If they intend to return to 60, 70, 83 or 98 per cent., they will damage the economy in exactly the same way as they did when they were in office. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the clause.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered, That, at this day's sitting, the Coroners Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Finance (No. 2) Bill

Again considered in Committee.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 256, Noes 201.

Division No. 282] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heyhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.

Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris

Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 23

HIGHER AND ADDITIONAL RATES OF INCOME TAX

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:-
The Committee divided: Ayes 250, Noes 199.

Division No. 283] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwynath
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 27 and 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Coroners Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.30 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill consolidates the Coroners Acts 1887 to 1980, together with a small number of related enactments. The consolidation will result in the repeal of eight Acts, two of which are over 100 years old, together with parts of 12 other Acts. In order to produce a satisfactory consolidation, the Law Commission made two recommendations for amendment to the law to remove possible ambiguity. Effect is given to these recommendations in clauses 22 and 29 of the Bill.

The Bill has been passed in another place where, in the usual way, it was referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills. That Committee reported that the recommendations by the Law Commission are necessary for the purpose of producing a satisfactory consolidation of the law, and that the amendments that the Bill will make to the existing law give effect to those recommendations. With the exception of those amendments, the Committee reported that the Bill is pure consolidation.

Our thanks are due to the Law Commission and the Joint Committee for their work on this useful contribution to the continuing process of keeping the statute book in easily accessible form.

10.32 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): This is another chance for me to ingratiate myself with my Scots colleagues. I see no reason why the Bill should not go through quickly.

10.33 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I do not wish to delay the House at this hour. I appreciate that this is a Second Reading of a consolidation Bill, and I do not wish to address the merits of the Bill. However, there are three points in the Bill that should have been considered in its consolidation.

On 26 November, as reported in column 268 of *Hansard*, I asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for a copy of the coroner's report on the Hungerford massacre. He replied that it was not publicly available, but that at my request he would draw it to the coroner's attention. I have heard nothing further since. I must therefore assume that coroner reports are not available to Members of this House or, indeed, to the public. I find that an extraordinary omission, given that judges' findings and the proceedings of a court of law are a matter of public record.

Secondly, the Bill does nothing for 1992 and the single European market. This might be a humorous point, but anyone who has suffered the tragedy of a death overseas and finds himself having to fight the labyrinth of EEC mismatched regulations in order to bring his loved ones home will appreciate what a serious problem this is.

The Bill, as far as I can ascertain, does not deal with the question that arose in a court case which requires a coroner to inquire into a death that occurs overseas. There is an astounding anomaly in that. The most famous case was that of Helen Smith, whose father has fought continually to prove that his daughter was murdered abroad.

Of course, there is a more far-reaching case, which is that of the loyal men who gave their lives in the service of their country in the Falklands war.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It is difficult to relate this to the Bill, which is purely a consolidation measure.

Mr. Field: The requirement for the coroner to open an inquest in those cases caused considerable grief to the families. I should have hoped that this consolidation measure would have overturned that court case and put the law back where it was before that case was heard.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read. [Queen's Consent signified]

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

First Scottish Standing Committee

10.34 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That the proviso to paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees) shall apply to the First Scottish Standing Committee in respect of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill with the substitution of the word 'fifteen' for the word 'sixteen' in line 27 of the Standing Order.

I am sure that the whole House will regret the need for this motion, which arises from the illness of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), and will wish him a speedy recovery.

The effect of the motion would be to make a minor amendment to Standing Order No. 86 to enable a change to be made to the composition of the First Scottish Standing Committee in its consideration of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. At present, the Standing Order provides that, where a public Bill is certified by Mr. Speaker as relating exclusively to Scotland, the Scottish Standing Committee considering it should include no fewer than 16 Members for Scottish constituencies. All that this motion would do is change that to 15 for consideration of this Bill.

Although the motion itself is unusual, the ideas behind it will be familiar to the House. It is a routine task for the Committee of Selection to alter the composition of a Standing Committee after it has begun its consideration of a Bill, either because of the illness or one of the members of that Standing Committee—as is the case here—or because of changes in appointments on the Treasury Bench or the Opposition Front Bench.

In this case, the matter cannot be left to the Committee of Selection because, to replace my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross with another of my hon. Friends, the number of hon. Members for Scottish constituencies on the Standing Committee must be reduced slightly. It was, of course, open to us to keep the number at 16, continue with my hon. and learned Friend as a member and increase the size of the Standing Committee to add to it an hon. Member from the Opposition Benches together with two of my hon. Friends, to maintain proportionately the Government's majority. But it seemed to us that the course we have chosen was more likely to be for the general convenience of the House.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Leader of the House come clean and admit that this is yet another example of the Government changing the goalposts for Scottish democracy? Until January this year there was a long-standing tradition in the House for a quarter of a century or more whereby Scottish Standing Committees dealing with Scottish legislation consisted only of hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies. The only reason why the long-standing tradition was broken by the Government was that the Conservative party was rejected by 76 per cent. of the people of Scotland at the general election and was reduced to a discredited rump in this place.

Now we have yet another example of the Government changing the goalposts. Is it any wonder that, particularly in Scotland, there is not only decreasing respect for the Government, but decreasing respect for the House? That will continue if the rules of the House are to be changed in such a way that the majority representatives of the people of Scotland do not have sufficient say on Scottish Standing Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's history is a little wonky on these points. There have been English Members on Scottish legislative committees for many years.

In this case the matter cannot be left to the Committee of Selection because in order to——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House gave one option, which was to increase the size of the Committee. Would it not be possible, within their own numbers, for the Government to appoint the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) to be a member of the Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: There are various options and I am in the process of trying to explain which I believe to be the best for the convenience of the House. No doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) catches your eye, he will be able to give his views on the course that he thinks would be most convenient for the House.

Standing Orders in no way provide for or imply a Scottish Standing Committee that is constituted exclusively of Members representing Scottish constituencies. Hon. Members representing English constituencies have been selected for the Scottish Standing Committee on previous occasions. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) made a valuable contribution to the Standing Committee considering the Housing (Scotland) Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) is already serving on the Committee considering the School Boards (Scotland) Bill.

I have no doubt that Opposition Members will volunteer another possible solution of simply replacing my hon. and learned Friend with an Opposition Member representing a Scottish constituency. That would give the Government their majority, and in the spirit of co-operation in which I am sure that offer would be made, I must say that I do not believe that that would be acceptable to the House generally. The basic requirement in Standing Orders that the composition of Standing Committees reflects the Government majority in the House as a whole is of longer standing and greater force than the Standing Order prescribing 16 as a minimum number of Members representing Scottish constituencies to comprise the Scottish Standing Committee.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The right hon. Gentleman said that that arrangement would be acceptable to the House as a whole. Does he understand that this proposal is unlikely to be acceptable to the people of Scotland? As the Government refuse to set up a Scottish Select Committee, as Conservative Members are making a mockery of Scottish Question Time and as the right hon. Gentleman is undermining the principle of scrutiny of Scottish legislation, what undertaking will he give that the Government still recognise the national entity of Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is over-egging the pudding rather substantially. If he thinks that reducing the number of Members representing Scottish constituencies on the Scottish Standing Committee from 16 to 15 will be

[Mr. Wakeham]

of great concern to many people in Scotland he has a lot to learn. This relatively minor matter must be dealt with in accordance with the wishes of the House.

The Standing Order and the Sessional Orders that preceded it have provided for a different minimum number of hon. Members over the years. When considering, therefore, whether to abandon a fundamental requirement about the formation of Committees of the House, or to modify slightly in this particular instance this aspect of Standing Orders, it is clear to me which should be the more mutable.

I hope that I have said enough to explain to the House briefly why we have moved the motion. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross has been unable to attend any sittings of the Committee considering the School Boards (Scotland) Bill so far, and looks very unlikely to be able to do so. In those circumstances, we need to make alternative arrangements, and the motion would enable those to be made in the way closest to the procedure that we customarily follow on such occasions by simply replacing my hon. and learned Friend with one of his colleagues. It represents a minor change to Standing Orders as they apply to the consideration of this Bill only. I commend it to the House.

10.42 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The debate has been brought about in part by the sad illness of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). At first sight, he is not a favourite character when viewed from the Opposition Benches. When he is present, he usually abuses me and mocks my constituency. Nevertheless, he is a colourful and unpredictable character whom most Opposition Members find infinitely preferable to the motley crew of merchant bankers, estate agents and second-hand car salesmen who attempt to adorn the Tory Benches.

There are few Scottish Tory Members to adorn the Government Benches because of the results of the general election, so that is all the more reason to wish the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross a speedy recovery from his illness, which has literally and precisely decimated Tory Scottish representation by removing one in 10 of them. I remind the House that at the election the Tories won precisely 10 seats in Scotland, the Labour party won 50 seats, and the other parties won 12 seats.

Standing Orders require at least 16 members of a Standing Committee considering a Scottish Bill to be Members representing Scottish constituencies, which is not an unreasonable requirement. Tonight's motion would reduce that number to 15 in respect of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill—and not because there are not enough Scottish MPs to make up the number specified in the Standing Order. In fact, there are enough Scottish Tory Members to fill the place occupied at present by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross. As the Leader of the House admitted, the tenth Tory would be the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), who is the Secretary of State for Defence. He might have difficulty in attending, but, even if he did, the Government would still have a majority of four over all the other parties on the Committee in question, so the appointment of the right hon. Gentleman would not put their legislation in jeopardy—provided, of course, that they can rely on the votes of some of the other Conservative Members on the Committee. That might be one explanation for this motion.

It is curious that the Tory party, which got just 14 per cent. of the seats in Scotland at the general election, should get 60 per cent. of the seats on the Committees considering Scottish business under the Standing Orders. The Labour party, which got 69 per cent. of the seats in Scotland, gets only 36 per cent. of the seats on the Committee. No doubt my Scottish colleagues will have more to say on that subject before the debate is through.

The plain fact is that without endangering their majority the Government could easily find an extra Scottish MP, from literally any of the parties in Scotland, to serve on the Committee. They are refusing to do so. Instead, they wish to augment their side of the Commitee with English Members. That would be bad enough in itself, but what angers me and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent Scottish seats—and, I am sure, the people of Scotland—is the stark contrast between the speed with which the Government in general and the Leader of the House in particular have decided to deal with their problem on the Scottish Standing Committee and their abject and insulting failure to establish the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

The loss of the services of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross is inconvenient to the Government, so the Leader of the House has come dashing to the House with a proposal to help. Contrast that with his sloth over the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. The people of Scotland are right to be angry. Scarcely two weeks have elapsed since the Committee on this Bill was established, yet the Leader of the House is changing its composition. Five months have passed since the House set up the other departmental Committees and still no action is set to take place on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

On 13 January, the Leader of the House said:

"The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is not a second-class Committee; it is as important a Select Committee as any other and should be formed in the same way."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 401.]

We entirely agree with that, and we want to know why the Leader of the House has not got on with setting it up.

In all seriousness, it seems to me that the current Leader of the House sees his role as that of an emeritus Government Chief Whip—a Chief Whip in semi-exile at the other end of the Chamber. Let us consider what some of his predecessors have said and what the learned textbooks say about the job. They all say that, besides having a duty to get the Government's business through the House, the Leader of the House has further and wider duties. He has a duty to secure in part the interests of the Opposition, minority parties and Back Benchers. I have to add to that, in the peculiar electoral circumstances that now prevail, that he has a duty to secure the interests of the people of Scotland. I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman does not seem to discharge those duties particularly well, or even to take them seriously.

I have looked in some of these textbooks for a quotation that aptly describes the duties that the right hon. Gentleman is supposed to carry out. He might say that any of those textbooks was prejudiced, being written by academics who might even be Socialists. I thought that I

would go to the fount of all wisdom, and I have a document entitled, "List of Ministerial Responsibilities", which was issued in February 1988 by the Cabinet Office.

The Privy Council office is referred to there and the duties of the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons include upholding

"the rights and privileges of the House as a whole,"

besides his duty to get Government business through the House.

There is no doubt that after the debate is over he will get this motion through by using the weight of the English majority that is at his command to reduce the number of Scottish Members on the Standing Committee. But the right hon. Gentleman should remember that he has those wider duties. He has said that we have a unitary House of Commons. We want to maintain the Union of Scotland with England. Every time something happens in the House that undermines the rights of proper representation of the Scottish people by those whom they elected, damage is done to the Union to which the Conservative party as well as the Labour party is supposed to subscribe.

The right hon. Gentleman may get away with it tonight, but he must take seriously the rights, needs and duties of those right hon. and hon. Members who were elected by the people of Scotland to represent them in the House. If he continues to treat them in the light-hearted, casual and cavalier way that he has since the general election, he will harm his reputation and that of the Tory party—although it is scarcely possible to harm it more than it has been harmed in Scotland. He will also harm the future of the House and the concept of the Union between England and Scotland. He should take this matter seriously.

I hope, whatever happens tonight, that the right hon. Gentleman will set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in the very near future to allow the representatives who were elected by the people of Scotland to get on with their task of representation, just as Members from every other part of the country are carrying out their task of representation, investigation, surveillance and monitoring on the other Select Committees. He will fail in his duty to the House and the country if he does not do so.

10.53 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I am not sure whether my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) will welcome the tribute that was paid to him by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). Perhaps when my hon. and learned Friend returns he will respond in his inimitable way. The whole House will agree with the Leader of the House and with the hon. Gentleman in wishing my hon. and learned Friend a speedy recovery.

This debate is not about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, but I shall respond briefly to what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has said about it. He is being completely unfair in this matter to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who has tried very hard to set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. He has been faced with the fact that some hon. Friends, including myself, which I say openly, refuse to serve on the Committee. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] For reasons that I have made clear publicly over many months in the House and outside.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras was a little ingenuous, to put it mildly, on this issue. He must know the position with regard to the composition of Standing Committees, which is referred to in "Erskine May". It says that they have developed since the 1880s to meet demands made upon the time of the House by the consideration of Bills in Committee of the whole House.

". . . the Committee of Selection is directed to have regard . . . to the composition of the House."

The key point is that a Standing Committee is undertaking functions that would otherwise be undertaken by the whole House sitting in Committee, as it did today when considering the Finance Bill. For that reason, Standing Committees must reflect the composition of the House.

In this instance, the Opposition are endeavouring to use the illness of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross as a political weapon.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given that my party and myself have no access to the Committee, does he accept that we have no political axe to grind about the illness of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn)? There is a strong argument to reflect political opinion in Scotland, as expressed at the last election, on the Committee to ensure that the genuine opinions of the Scottish people are voiced in that Committee. In that way we could reach genuine conclusions that reflected political and public opinion.

Mr. Stewart: If the hon. Lady regrets that her party is not represented on the Committee, I remind her that there is an obvious way of achieving that without changing the Standing Order. If the Opposition had agreed to increase the numbers on the Committee, that would——

Mr. Wallace: I represent all the minority parties on the Committee of Selection. If the increase mentioned by the Leader of the House had been agreed, there is no way in which another member of a so-called minority party would have been allowed on the Committee as my hon. Friend the Member of Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was already on it. The hon. Gentleman's argument is factually incorrect.

Mr. Stewart: The decision reached would have to be the result of negotiations between Opposition parties. It was perfectly possible for an extra member from the Opposition parties to be appointed to the Standing Committee if they had agreed that the Committee membership be increased from 18 to 20 members. If that had been agreed, there would have been no need to change the Standing Order.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) may say that that would mean that the Labour party insisted upon a Labour Member. That may be the case, but it would have been possible to increase the numbers on the Committee without changing Standing Order No. 86. The official Opposition have refused to take such action. That is why my right hon. Friend has had to table the motion.

I support the motion, but I believe that my right hon. Friend is wrong not to tackle the problem in a more fundamental way because the Standing Order amendment applies only to the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. But the problem will persist. *[Laughter.]* I do not know why hon. Members are laughing. The problem will persist because my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross is unlikely to be back in the House when the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill is considered by the Standing Committee. When the Bill comes into Committee, my right hon. Friend will be faced with exactly the same problem. The Government should fundamentally consider the problem because it could recur throughout the Parliament.

Mr. Canavan: Change the goalposts.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has a long record of attending Scottish Standing Committees without being a member. I do not know whether he will repeat his efforts on the Housing (Scotland) Bill or the School Boards (Scotland) Bill.

It is wholly unreasonable for the Secretary of State for Defence to serve on Scottish Standing Committees. It is also unreasonable for all four Scottish Office Ministers to serve on a Scottish Standing Committee when three of them, as happened on the Housing (Scotland) and the School Boards (Scotland) Bills, will contribute nothing apart from voting.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that a party that cannot get its members elected in Scotland should not introduce controversial legislation for Scotland? Is he aware that the last fundamental change to this aspect of the Standing Order —reducing the number of Scots required to be on the Scottish Standing Committee—was introduced in November 1971 by his right hon. Friend, now Lord Campbell of Croy, then the Secretary of State for Scotland?

The reasons that the noble Lord gave for reducing the numbers then were in part to do with the fact that the Tories did not have enough Members then, either, but also specifically so that Conservative Members could be available to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. These problems keep returning to haunt the Conservative party. If there is to be a reduced number on the Standing Committee, why cannot we have a Select Committee?

Mr. Stewart: Considerations to do with the Select Committee are wholly irrelevant to the motion.

I do not think this problem will go away in Scottish legislation. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will consider changing the Standing Orders for future Bills in a way that will reasonably allow Ministers to undertake their ministerial duties, so that the whole Scottish Office team will not have to sit on a Standing Committee, which is not reasonable.

11.2 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is temporarily indisposed, we take this opportunity to wish him a speedy recovery to full health. It would appear that he is not so indisposed, however, as to be prevented from giving quotations to *The Sun*. I note that last Monday he was quoted as saying:

"It strikes me as amazing that here we have 640 certificated alcoholics on a 24-hour licence and the catering services make a loss."

That is the sort of comment for which the hon. and learned Gentleman is well renowned. When he serves on Scottish Standing Committees, he is not Lobby fodder; my experience is that he generally makes a vigorous——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Spirited?

Mr. Wallace: —spirited contribution to the proceedings. We regret his illness and hope that he will soon be back with us.

The motion reflects a considerable problem in the Conservative ranks. It will not be as easily resolved as the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) suggested. He said that if the Committee were increased to 20 it would be possible for the Opposition to agree that an additional member of the so-called minority parties should serve on it.

As hon. Members will recall, when we debated the composition of the Select Committee on Televising the Proceedings of the House, the Government and Opposition Front Benches emphasised time and again that only one member of the minority parties would be represented on a Committee of 20. I am sure that the hon. Member for Eastwood voted for that at the end of the day. So it is disingenuous of him to claim that there would be an additional member from the minority parties on the Committee if we increased it to 20. That is not what the conventions of the House allow.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I did not claim that. I claimed that it would have been possible to increase the numbers on the Committee to 20, which would have given the Opposition an extra member.

Mr. Wallace: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, he suggested that might have been the position taken by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

It is clear that the Government have a problem. They managed to get only 10 Scottish Members at the general election. In spite of that, in the weeks and months following the election, the Secretary of State for Scotland assured us that it would be business as usual. He was totally unperturbed, yet, 10 months later, the Leader of the House has to come and change the rules. The Government know that they cannot have business as usual because they do not have the numbers to sustain business as usual.

The Government could have business as usual, if they were prepared to allow the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) to serve on that Committee. The Committee of Selection is a remarkable Committee. It is one of the few Select Committees that does not apply to the Liaison Committee for permission to travel abroad, much to the regret of many of my colleagues on that Committee. The Committee was recently asked to nominate members for a Standing Committee on statutory instruments, dealing with a legal aid order. The list contained the names of some illustrious Conservative Members, including the right hon. Member for Ayr. I do not demean the importance of that issue, but if that Committee was sufficiently worthy to have the right hon. Gentleman as a member, the Committee on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill—an important issue affecting the future of Scottish education—is also worthy of the right hon. Gentleman. The Ministry of Defence does not bring legislation before the House in great volumes. I suspect that it is a long time since the right hon. Gentleman served on a Standing Committee. I am sure that it would do him good to repeat the experience, and it would avoid the need for the Government to come to the House this evening to change the rules.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are particular problems in Ayr, Prestwick and Troon, in respect of Ayr academy and a number of other school matters, which would make it particularly important for the right hon. Gentleman to serve on that Committee?

Mr. Wallace: I do not know as much about the issues affecting Ayrshire as the hon. Gentleman, but I have great respect for the right hon. Member for Ayr and his local knowledge would enable him to make a valuable contribution to the Committee.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak.

If the House agrees to the motion, as it no doubt will, who will be the substitute for the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross? A couple of weeks ago, when we were debating the so-called Mates amendment, pressure was brought to bear by the Whips. Was that rebellion contained by the threat that those hon. Members who dared to oppose the Government on that occasion might find themselves on the Standing Committee on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill? That would perhaps have been a more effective deterrent than the specious suggestion that the Government were going to amend in any significant respect the rebate provisions relating to the poll tax.

I suspect that the onus may be put on someone whose experience of Scottish education is a cold shower at Gordonstoun or, worse still, at Eton. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) had no racist intent when he said, looking at the serried ranks of the double-breasted, new Conservative Members after the 1983 election, that it was like meeting a delegation of Japanese business men —he could not tell them apart. I regret that the hon. Member nominated to the Committee might not have the flair and flavour of the contribution that one could have expected from the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross.

The Opposition will be alienated by the fact that there is a principle at stake. We regret that an hon. and learned Member is ill, but the hon. Member for Eastwood was frank when he made a point that has been made time and again. With regard to the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill, I suspect that the Government will be quite pleased because we all know that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross is an opponent of the Bill and it will do the Government no harm to have him out of the way.

However, the matter of principle is the change in the rules. The Leader of the House tried to dismiss the objections by saying that the Government were offering 15 instead of 16. Sixteen is a significant figure. It is the minimum number for a Select Committee and I am certain that that number was included in the Standing Orders after some thought. To depart from that figure is a matter not just of incidental interest for the House, but of some principle.

It is important that we should uphold that principle, and I am sure that we will attempt to do that tonight. However, we all know that the Government have sufficient English Members to vote through whatever they want. They are the type of English Members who voted for the poll tax in Scotland, yet wore their hearts on their sleeves when it came to the poll tax for England. We know that type. We know where their principles lie when it comes to their self-interests, and they certainly do not lie with the interests of Scotland.

For that reason we will oppose the motion. We accept that the Government will always get their majority in the House, but when the people have their say—as they will on Thursday—they will give their verdict and it will not be for the Government.

11.11 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): They may have changed the name of their party, but they have not changed their humbug. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the Secretary of State for Defence, might have been included as a member of the Committee. When was the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel)—the leader of what was called the Liberal party—last a member of a Scottish Standing Committee? I make no criticism of the right hon. Gentleman because I understand that he has other duties and one would expect him to carry them out. Quite properly a leader of a party must do that. The right hon. Gentleman would be the first to accept that a senior Government Minister, running one of the major Departments, could not, and would not be expected to, carry out duties in a Standing Committee.

We do not expect the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale to serve on every Standing Committee, and we should not hear the kind of humbug——

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland in a moment if he will just let me finish. What I have to say is very important.

Conservative Members need no lessons about service on Standing Committees. I draw the attention of the House to those Members who head the attendance list —and have done so in the previous two Parliaments—for Standing Committees. The hon. Members with the most hours in Standing Committees are Scottish Conservative Back-Bench Members.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He uses the opting out provisions of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs whenever he can. Will he accept that my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) served on the Standing Committee of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Bill after becoming leader of the party?

Mr. Walker: My right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr has served on a Scottish Standing Committee in this Parliament, and the hon. Gentleman drew our attention to that, but he is still coming out with the same humbug.

Opposition Members quite properly drew attention to the fact that the situation has been brought about by the absence of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). Quite properly, all hon. Members will wish my hon. and learned Friend a speedy recovery. Anyone who thinks that we in this House are immune from illness and that parties will not be affected is not living in the real world. Equally, we must recognise and acknowledge that nothing is permanent in politics and that we live in a transient situation. Labour Members are very thin on the ground in southern England.

[Mr. Walker]

Only one Labour Member has been elected in an area with about 15 million people. That is three times the population of Scotland, yet there is only one Labour Member.

That imbalance is, quite properly, taken into account by the fact that "Erskine May" lays down that the Selection Committee must take into consideration the composition of the House—not any particular geographic composition, but the general composition of the House. The Labour party would do well to remember that, because in recent times it has never formed a Government without being in a minority in England. It is important that the Opposition realise that they, like us, are the party of the Union. If the Labour party really believes itself to be the party of the Union, it must recognise that if it ever hopes to form a Government it will probably do so with a minority of English Members.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the analogy he draws between parts of England and Scotland is not only irrelevant but offensive? This is the United Kingdom, in which Scotland is a nation. We came into the Union, and that is why many of us insist that Scotland's nationhood should be accepted by this House in the way that it is not accepted at present.

Mr. Walker: I need no lessons from the hon. Gentleman about my loyalty to Scotland and about its being a nation. I recognise that eight out of 10 people who live in these islands live in England, that one person in 10 lives in Scotland, and that eight out of 10 of all taxpayers live in England and only one out of 10 in Scotland. One must bear that in mind when operating a unitary parliamentary system. For Opposition Members constantly to suggest that they are the only people who recognise and care about the Scottish dimension is more humbug from the same Benches. I do not doubt the integrity of hon. Gentlemen and their fight for Scotland, and I trust that they do not doubt mine. I mean that seriously. The hon. Gentleman must remember that we come to this Parliament as Members of a unitary Parliament, not as Members from any individual part of the unitary system.

I may say to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), am disappointed that we have not taken the opportunity to rectify what is obviously a problem. It would take only one right hon. or hon. Member to fall ill. I remind my right hon. Friend that it was through good luck—nothing else—that my eyes were not damaged a week ago last Sunday. The skin around my eyes was damaged, but I was able to attend the House and be on duty to maintain our majority in the Standing Committee. Had my eyes been damaged in the accident, the probability is that I could not have attended, however much I might have wanted to do so. We shall be faced with that sort of problem continually throughout this Parliament.

We must find a practical solution to maintaining the balance of the House, while at the same time recognising the record of Scottish Conservatives in the hours they spend in Standing Committees. That is the point with which I began my speech, and my right hon. Friend might bear it in mind. We have never been found wanting in doing our duty in getting legislation through the House. Indeed, Scottish Conservative Members have the best record of attendance and the best record for hours of attendance in Standing Committees, and that should be kept in mind when selecting Members for Standing Committee membership.

11.18 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), especially as he can do himself so much damage by the removal of safety glasses. I shall treasure that story. The wisdom that is inculcated by that kind of behaviour is a moral to all Opposition Members.

The Standing Committee in question is not an isolated, run-of-the-mill Committee. It has been entrusted with an extremely precious obligation, and that obligation has been laid upon it by no less a figure than the Prime Minister herself. That point seems to have been forgotten. I cannot understand why the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) is not rushing to the Prime Minister's defence. After all, he is the Secretary of State for Defence. The Prime Minister laid that obligation upon the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, among others, and now the Secretary of State for Scotland has had to fall into line. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has now been entrusted with the dirty work. That is what is happening, and for them now to fail to ensure that their mistress's will is carried out, by providing yet one more Tory Member for the Standing Committee, seems to me to be an extraordinary phenomenon.

Nor is it unusual to see that the same kind of arrangement, with the same kind of behaviour by the Prime Minister, has taken place in relation to this Committee as, apparently, has taken place in a number of causes celebres, from Westland onward. I refer to the involvement by the Prime Minister, the denials by the Prime Minister and the leaks in relation to the Prime Minister. We should like to know from where the leak emanated.

I cannot think of any more expert member of the Committee than the Secretary of State for Defence to inquire into that leak on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. Clearly, before the Government advance much further with the Bill, they must find out the background of the leak. Previous leaks have often been investigated by Select Committees. This one is being investigated at No. 10 itself. The only Committee in existence that can explore the leak of the information that the hon. Member for Eastwood was to ensure the proposal of an opt-out clause had to be this Standing Committee. I see that the hon. Member for Eastwood is at the starting gate and ready to go.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The issue was raised with me on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The hon. Gentleman entirely accepts that there was no question of any conspiracy or plot involving me. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make it clear to the House that my intention of putting forward an opting-out amendment had been made public in the House long before the letters to which he refers.

Mr. Buchan: Perish the thought that I should suggest that so innocent a Member as the hon. Member for Eastwood would become involved in anything so dishonourable as a conspiracy. It was nowhere near my intention to make such a suggestion. If I were the Prime Minister, I would not have trusted him in a conspiracy

either. The person whom she could trust in a conspiracy is the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). The hon. Member for Eastwood was the fall guy, and I completely accept his innocence.

We have another Tory available to be appointed to the Committee: the Secretary of State for Defence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has pointed out, there is every good reason why, for educational purposes, he should be there.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Buchan: I knew that was going to happen.

Mr. Foulkes: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are 182 good reasons why the Secretary of State should be on the Committee? [HON. MEMBERS: "Ninety-one."] I am sorry; 91 good reasons. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to ingratiate himself with 100 or so people in his constituency to ensure—albeit in vain—his continued existence as a Member of the House, he ought not just to be pulled on to the Committee; he should be eager, anxious, even desperate to serve on it.

Mr. Buchan: I can only presume that it is because of the desperation that my hon. Friend describes that the right hon. Gentleman has been prevented from serving on the Committee. There are other elements of the conspiracy. By the way, I do not like the mathematics of those educated in Scotland. Surely the figure is not 91 but 92—91 plus one. I do not know what is happening to Scottish education under the present Government.

It was not only right and essential that the Secretary of State—who was apparently desperate—should be on that Committee; it was necessary because of the leak. We want to know who blew the gaff on the conspiracy. That is even more interesting than the conspiracy itself. I only wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had spoken—perhaps he will do so after me—for he is a great expert on these matters. But it is a very interesting story, which only the Standing Committee could elicit. No Ministry is more experienced on the question of leaks than the Ministry of Defence. It is an expert Ministry, and we should have welcomed the presence of the Secretary of State for Defence to explore the question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is very interesting, but I find it difficult to relate to the motion. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will return to the motion.

Mr. Buchan: It might have seemed convoluted and distant, but such is the intricacy of this Government. They seem to be able to drag distant elements into the most peculiar places. In this case, the Secretary of State for Defence would have been the 10th or 11th man on the Committee. As far as I know, he was available and able to serve.

Hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies were complaining not about putting an additional Scottish Member on the Committee, which was obvious, and, as I have shown, eminently desirable to get at the truth, but about the Government wanting to reduce the number by one and cutting out a member of the Committee instead of bringing on the available Scottish Member.

It is even more strange because I am also serving on a Committee tomorrow, an absolutely Scottish Committee, to consider the Salmon (Weekly Close Time) Scotland Regulations 1988—*[Interruption.]* As if upon cue, my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), the expert on salmon, has arrived. Suddenly he sniffs salmon in the air and he arrives. That Committee has 20 members to discuss a statutory instrument, but here the Government cannot get more than 15 Members for a Standing Committee which has so much to explore. They have imported five additional Tory Members on to the Committee. We know they are short of numbers, but the selection is indeed interesting. I shall not name them all —that would be invidious—but one in particular attracts my attention. It shows the state of the Conservative party that the Government have appointed to a Committee on a statutory instrument meeting at half past 10 on a Wednesday morning—that must be a record for the right hon. Gentleman—the chairman of the 1922 Committee.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I remind my hon. Friend that the chairman of the 1922 Committee is on that Committee because, like so many hon. Members in this House and in the other place, he is up to his neck in salmon vested interests.

Mr. Buchan: I should never have given way to my hon. Friend. He has taken my best line. There is nothing like salmon for getting the Tories to rise to the bait. Like the falls of Pitlochry, they leap to keep an eye on king salmon. If only we could bring salmon and the freshwater fisheries of Scotland into the ownership and control of the people of Scotland, we would slash the tyranny of king salmon, and some of us who have been given the opportunity will say so tomorrow. However, I seek not to stray from the motion.

In the absence of the Secretary of State for Defence, at least we have the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland and the hon. Member for Eastwood—who has interfered so much in my constituency, but I can forgive him for that—who between them will tell us not who started the conspiracy, but who gave the leak to the *Glasgow Herald* in an exchange of letters.

Was it the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland? Was it one of his civil servants? I cannot believe that, as I know the civil servant who serves under or over him. The hon. Member for Eastwood has already said that he was not involved in the conspiracy or the leak. The Secretary of State for Defence, the expert in leaks, was not involved. So we are left with two people. One is the Secretary of State for Scotland. He looks so innocent. Who could suspect him of a leak? However, as Sherlock Holmes once said, "When you have eradicated all the possible solutions, the one that is left is the only possible one." Who is left? The Prime Minister herself. We should like an answer on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see anything in the motion that could lead the hon. Gentleman to his argument about leaks. I hope that he will address himself to the motion.

Mr. Buchan: If I had had a little more warning, I could have clearly shown the relationship between that Committee and the leak. But my main point is that had the one remaining Scottish Conservative Member been appointed to the Committee he might have given us the source of that leak.

[Mr. Buchan]

As I have not been appointed to the Committee, I have some questions for someone who has and who is here. If I had been on the Committee I would have asked that hon. Member how many of his constituents go to an overcrowded school in my constituency. I would have asked him how many Eastwood constituents are in schools in my constituency where they are seeking to create problems. "How many came from outside Paisley?" would be a useful question. I regret that I have not been appointed to the Committee, so I cannot challenge him other than by swords and thorns at half past 11 at night.

These are serious discussions about the problems put forward by members of the minority party and by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I speak also for my colleagues in the Scottish Labour party. We would have preferred more Scottish Members and fewer Tory Members on the Committee, and the elections on Thursday will show that the people of Scotland feel the same.

11.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): First, let me emphasise the kind regards that I send to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). We all wish him a speedy recovery from his illness. This debate is no criticism of the hon. and learned Gentleman.

As always when we discuss matters relating to Scotland, this debate has shown itself to be an embarrassment to the Government. It has provided us with one of the keenest arguments in support of the televising of the House. That would ensure that our proceedings are relayed to the people of Scotland so that they can see that the minority viewpoint proposed by the Conservative party is completely alienated from the majority view in Scotland. The arguments tonight also show the desperate need for decentralisation, because education in Scotland is, after all, traditionally seen as being separate, different and worthy of support.

The School Boards (Scotland) Bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation that faces us during this Parliament. All Scottish hon. Members must be aware from their mail bags of the various priorities allocated by our constituents to various pieces of legislation. The responses from my constituents clearly show that their first priority is the poll tax, on which the verdict will be given on Thursday; secondly, the housing benefit and social security changes; and, thirdly, the education proposals for Scotland, and, in particular, the School Boards (Scotland) Bill.

Ever since the initial proposals were brought forward I have had a heavy correspondence, not only from my constituents, but from people from all areas of Scotland, expressing their anxieties about the Government's proposals. The School Boards (Scotland) Bill must be treated as a serious piece of legislation, and the composition of the Committee should also be treated seriously.

The Government appear to be trying to set a precedent for reducing the number of Scottish Members on a Scottish Standing Committee from 16 to 15. I fully appreciate that when the Committee was established the Leader of the House and the Committee of Selection were faced with a problem because several hon. Members were serving on Standing Committee D which was dealing with the British Steel Bill, but that Bill completed its deliberations at about 6 pm this evening, thus releasing five hon. Members to participate in this Standing Committee.

Although many Opposition Members have emphasised the role of the Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), it is worth noting that the Minister of State, Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), has now been released from his responsibilities in Standing Committee D. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, I did not realise that the hon. Gentlemen was already a member of the First Scottish Standing Committee. Four Opposition Members have been released to serve on that Committee. It is important to recognise that, given the importance of the legislation to Scotland, hon. Members are willing, available and wish to serve on the Committee.

The precedent is important. If the Government solve their problems of minority representation in Scotland by reducing Scottish representation on a Scottish Standing Committee, there is every likelihood that, after the next general election, Conservative Scottish representation will be reduced even further. Are Scottish hon. Members increasingly to be denied the opportunity to serve on Standing Committees, so that Conservative Members who represent English seats are given access to such Committees, to vote and to decide on legislation that is of importance to the people of Scotland? That is a dangerous precedent for the House to set. I hope that the Leader of the House and other Conservative Members will think carefully before they cast their votes. They are treading a dangerous path. It denies democratic aspirations.

As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said, Scotland must be regarded as a nation, not as a region. If we deny Scotland's right as a nation, we are in danger of denying Scottish people their democratic aspirations, and we would be treading a dangerous path.

I speak as a Member of a party that has been denied access to the Committee. I was grateful to the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), for mentioning the rights of minority parties. Perhaps it would have been more helpful if he had made it clear that it is a matter of ensuring, not that a Labour Member, but that an Opposition Member, becomes a member of the Committee. As a minority party, having fought all 72 seats in Scotland——

Mr. Wallace: Seventy one.

Mrs. Ewing: We fought 72 seats in Scotland, having strongly argued that the people of Scotland should opt for self-government. We won three seats, having fought democratically for our right to representation. We are not trying to achieve that result in any way other than through the ballot box. We have a legitimate right to have our voices and opinions heard in Standing Committees.

On Second Reading I spoke not only as my party's education spokesman but as an ex-teacher within the Scottish education system. I have a deep knowledge of needs within the education system. We have a great deal to offer the debate in Standing Committee.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The hon. Lady said that the Scottish National party fought democratically. Will she explain the recent decision by some members of the Scottish National party to break the law with regard to

the community charge and encourage other people in Scotland, who perhaps do not understand the charge, also to break the law?

Mrs. Ewing: It is interesting to hear that some of the loudest plaudits for that stance have come from Members of the party of the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). We are challenging the legality of the Government to impose a tax on people who opposed that form of taxation in the democratic processes of the general election.

I shall now return to the right of the Scottish National party to have its voice heard on the Committee. I speak with the authority of someone who went through the training procedures within the Scottish education system. I worked as a remedial teacher within the Scottish secondary education system. I believe that we have a real opportunity to offer genuine opinions and options on this Committee. We have been denied that opportunity because the Government have taken the coward's way out. They have decided to reduce the membership of the Committee rather than increase it and face democratic aspirations. The Government are treading a dangerous path and judgment will be given, not only on Thursday of this week, but in future general elections, when people recognise that the Government are intent on destroying the Scottish education system, which we treasure and value.

11.42 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I shall be as helpful and constructive as ever to the Leader of the House. I can offer a way out. The Secretary of State for Defence is far too busy. He has to attend NATO planning groups and he has to go to Brussels and Washington. However, there is one English Member who could contribute a vast amount of knowledge and enlightenment to this debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "The Prime Minister".] That is it. Why go for the monkey when we can have the organ grinder? The right hon. Member to whom I am referring is the Member who dispatched Professor Brian Griffiths—a special sort of nuncio or emissary—to talk to heaven knows who in Strathclyde behind the backs of the local authorities.

Why should the Select Committee mess around with the Secretary of State for Defence, who could only do the job second hand, when it could find out first hand why the right hon. Member in question came to the aid of her hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)? The right hon. Lady could explain her motivation in getting her office to leak the correspondence on the benefits of opting out and the promotion of her own view.

I do not wish to be long at this time of night, but if we cannot have Perth and Kinross, why should we not have Finchley?

11.43 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I would welcome the addition of the Prime Minister to the Committee on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill. That would at least guarantee that she will learn something about Scottish education. On a recent visit to Scotland, the right hon. Lady visited my constituency and expressed astonishment that Scottish schools were not run by boards of management, as they are in England. That is rich from someone who has been Prime Minister of Scotland for nine years. The hon. Lady does not even know how the Scottish education system is run. She would clearly benefit from membership of that Committee.

I was impressed earlier in the debate with the passion expressed by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). He gave expression to his Unionist sympathies and sentiments. That is only to be expected from an hon. Member who has the nickname "Biggles" and who can be seen strutting around the streets of Perth bedecked in his kilt, tartan and bowler hat, without seeing a thing. He really gives physical presence to the very idea of Unionism.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend speaks of the hon. Gentleman wearing a bowler hat. Was there an Orange walk on in Perth that day?

Mr. McAllion: I would not slur the hon. Gentleman to that extent.

I would like to join all the other hon. Members who have spoken in this debate and say that I regret the illness that has afflicted the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). Unlike the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), I cannot vouch for the independence of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross in Committees. I have served with him only on the Standing Committee dealing with the Housing (Scotland) Bill and he did not show a great deal of independence on that Committee. He voted with the Government in every Division except one. However, he was good entertainment value. I remember that during one late-night sitting, when we were debating some obscure part of the legislation, the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross made a contribution that began with a description of the wallpaper in the Committee Room and ended by discussing the sexual predilections of the Gladstone Cabinet and how it affected whores in London. Therefore, he can be an entertaining Member to have on a Committee and he will certainly be missed on the Committee dealing with the School Boards (Scotland) Bill.

I regret the motion that has been proposed by the Leader of the House. It weakens and undermines the right of representation of Scottish hon. Members. I should have hoped that that view could have been shared by Scottish Conservative Members. I am new to the House, but I understand that the Standing Orders have been framed partly to facilitate the passage of Government business through the House but equally to ensure that minority interests are protected in the House. It grieves me to say so, but in the short time I have been here, it seems that Scottish interests are minority interests. I have heard ad nauseam from Conservative Members the argument about the fact that we are a unitary Parliament and act as a unitary Parliament. However, with only 71 Scottish Members in a 650 Member House, that, by definition, means that Scottish interests are minority interests. Therefore, it is all the more important that we protect Scottish interests through the Standing Orders.

Where those Standing Orders have been established to protect Scottish interests, they should not be abandoned lightly as they are in the motion. The motion would amend Standing Order No. 86 and reduce the minimum number of Scottish Members from 16 to 15 on an important Scottish Standing Committee. I hope that all hon. Members who are genuinely interested in protecting Scottish interests in this place will not support the motion and will vote against it with the Opposition.

[Mr. McAllion]

I understand the difficulties that have been caused by the illness of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross. However, we cannot allow his illness to influence our voting on this important matter. I spoke earlier today to a noble Lord who was a Member of the House of Commons during the Labour Government of 1974-79. He explained that the majority under which that Labour Government had to operate could vary from four to one. Therefore, they were always on a tight edge as to whether they would get their legislation through. He explained that no consideration was given by the Conservative Opposition to the illnesses that afflicted Labour Members. He recalled Labour Members who had suffered serious heart attacks. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) found himself in that position. The Tory Opposition Whip insisted that those hon. Members be brought by ambulance to this place so that he could ensure that they were present when Divisions took place. They showed no consideration for the medical condition of some Labour Members, and I do not think that we should allow the medical condition of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross to affect our decision on this issue. If it was right that the Labour Government of 1974-79 had to get their business through under the Standing Orders, that should apply to the Government today, with their majority of more than 100.

Reference has been made several times to the fact that an offer has been made by the Leader of the House to the Opposition that we can have one additional member on the Committee and that that member may come from any political party on the Opposition Benches. However, the price that has to be paid for that concession is the addition of two English Members to the Committee. May I draw the Leader of the House's attention to the fact that that would mean that the Government majority on the Committee would increase to four and that there would be an extension of English influence on what is an exclusively Scottish Bill.

I do not have to remind the Leader of the House of the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and of the exception that he has taken in the past to interference by English Members in exclusively Scottish matters. Indeed, he disrupted a Standing Committee, on which I served, to show his disagreement. When my hon. Friend took that disruptive action, he had the backing of Labour Members serving on the Committee. It is outrageous that English Members should be drafted on to a Committee to interfere in specific Scottish legislation.

We have heard contradictory speeches from Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said that English Members serving on Scottish Standing Committees only vote and make no other contribution. The Leader of the House assured us that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) had made an important contribution to the Housing (Scotland) Bill. I sat through 100 hours of debate in that Committee, and if he did I failed to notice it. His contribution was on a par with that of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on the Health and Medicines Bill. In nearly 100 hours of debate, he contributed only about 12 minutes. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford contributed a great deal less during the 100 hours of the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

It is important to recognise that Scottish Members object to Scottish Committees being influenced and interfered with by English Members who have no direct influence on them. We are keen to ensure that Scottish representation on Committees is defended.

Mr. Foulkes: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although one or two hon. Members have referred on a number of occasions in the debate to a unitary Parliament, this is a Parliament of the union of the two Parliaments of England and Scotland? Scottish legislation, which was transferred from the Scottish Parliament to this one, is in a special position in this Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I wish that Conservative Members could get into their thick heads the fact that Scotland is not trapped in the Union. Scotland decides to be part of the Union but, equally, it can decide not to be a part of it. If the Government continue to deal with Scottish affairs in the way that they have since last June, Scottish people may decide that it is no longer in their interests to be a part of the Union.

The Government's record on Scottish affairs since the election last June is appalling. They have failed to set up a Scottish Select Committee. With 370 Conservative Members, they cannot find five who are sufficiently interested in Scotland to serve on the Scottish Select Committee. The Scottish Grand Committee is supposed to meet at least six or perhaps 12 times a year. In the last year it has met once, and that was because the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) thought that there was some capital on education matters to be made out of it before the local government elections.

Scottish Question Time has become a mockery as time and again English Members deliberately disrupt it. The Housing (Scotland) Bill and the School Boards (Scotland) Bill are being disrupted. The Government do not give a damn for the people of Scotland or Scottish affairs. It is time that Scottish Members stood up for Scotland instead of following their Whips' advice and the kind of motion that is before the House.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) had spoken for only 12 minutes in a total of 100 hours debate on the Health and Medicines Bill. My hon. Friend was not a member of that Committee, but he spoke on Second Reading, on Report and Third Reading. Perhaps the hon. Member for Dundee, East will withdraw his remark.

Mr. McAllion: I based my remarks entirely on comments that appeared in the Scottish press. If the hon. Lady would prefer, I could refer to the Standing Committee on the Local Government Act 1988 to which the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) made a small contribution. He missed a Division relating to the exemption of Scotland from the provisions of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mrs. Ewing: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) initially referred to the Committee on the Health and Medicines Bill. Will you, Sir, ask the hon.

Gentleman to withdraw his remarks, as my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) was not a member of that particular Committee?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) wish to clarify that point?

Mr. McAllion: There seems to be a discrepancy in my advice and the advice that I have just received from the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). I shall check my sources and report back to the House.

11.54 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is obvious from Opposition Members' exchanges that it would be quite impossible for them to agree to add members to the Standing Committee; they are constantly fighting among themselves.

First, I wish to send my best wishes to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). I spoke to him on the telephone the night before last and he was in good heart and longing to get back to sort out Opposition Members, yet again, when he is fit enough.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to me that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has come forward with a most interesting proposition from the Front Bench, albeit below the Gangway. Should we not now defer the proceedings of the Committee until the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) returns?

Sir Hector Monro: It is a pity that the hon. Member likes to proceed by means of points of order rather than debate.

As I was saying, it is strange that the Opposition should be sold on the numbers game. If they cast their minds back —perhaps further than they might wish—they will remember that the Standing Committee was originally the whole of the Scottish Grand Committee with added members. It was a Whips' nightmare to try to whip 35 or so hon. Members on each side and maintain a majority. In the 1960s, a Labour Government were happy to have a Standing Committee of 32, which subsequently became 16. There is no particular reason why the number should be 16, 18, 20 or anything else; it should be for the convenience of the House.

It is also important to remember that the squabbling Opposition had the opportunity to have a Standing Committee of 20 members. All those Opposition Members who wanted to serve on the Committee could then have had their names added. They would then have had an opportunity to participate in the debates in the Standing Committee. The important point to all of us who are members of the Committee is that the otherwise mediocre quality of Opposition Members' contributions would then have been enhanced. It could not have been worse; it must have been better. Opposition Members have missed a great opportunity to add two more members to the Standing Committee while still maintaining the balance of the parties.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The hon. Gentleman talks about offers being made to Opposition Members on the composition of the Standing Committee. Does he accept that no direct representations were made to the minority parties about the setting up of the Committee?

Sir Hector Monro: I presume that the hon. Lady has heard of the usual channels. The Liberal party likes to name a Chief Whip, when it has only one Whip. The Scottish National party also has a Chief Whip although it has only one Whip. They could all have co-operated and discussed the matter together with the usual channels. I am sure that they would then have had the opportunity to field an additional member of the Standing Committee.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman has made several speeches and many interventions. It is time that he sat down and let other people have a word. He may be the Scottish Chief Whip of the Social and Liberal Democrats, and the rest of them for all I know.

If only Opposition Members, of whatever party, could have co-ordinated their opposition—my goodness, it would add a little fun if they gave us something to attack —they could have added two more members to the Standing Committee and we should have added the same number on our side. All would have been perfectly in order and this debate would not have been necessary. Everything could have been sorted out quietly through the usual channels; but no, the Labour party wanted to make a great scene and song and dance. They have achieved nothing.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: No, I am certainly not giving way to the hon. Gentleman; good Lord, no. Opposition Members turn up at debates, do not listen to them, expect to get in at short notice, and behave like Lord God Almighty. I shall not give way when we are reaching the end of the debate. If hon. Members opposite did not interrupt so much, another Opposition Member might have been called in the debate.

The important consideration is that we have put forward a motion to amend the Standing Orders. If hon. Members opposite had been prepared to co-operate and add extra members to the Standing Committee from their own parties, they would have had an opportunity to come in and join the debates on the Bill. From what we have heard in the past four sittings their members are sadly lacking in experience.

Therefore, I have every intention of supporting the motion because it is the right thing to do in the circumstances.

12.2 am

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I shall be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened carefully to what Conservative Members have said during the debate.

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) let the cat out of the bag. This is not just a little, inconspicuous motion laid before the House at dead of night; it is a very dangerous motion. The hon. Member for Eastwood said that we might have to take a more fundamental look at the problem and bring forward further measures later to deal with the situation. In other words, this changing of the goalposts will not end tonight. It will go on and on because of the increasing difficulties that the Government will face in their Scottish legislative programme.

It is not good enough for hon. Members to say that this is a unitary Parliament, that the Government have a majority in the House, and therefore they must have a majority on all Standing Committees, including Scottish

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Committees. It is incumbent upon any Government to look at the various countries making up the United Kingdom and to take into account the differences in tradition and, indeed, democratic expression of Members representing the different countries of the Union. To say that this is a unitary Parliament within a United Kingdom and that therefore the Government must always have a majority on a Scottish Standing Committee is nonsense.

Let us suppose that the Government had been reduced to zero representation in Scotland, which is not beyond the bounds of possibility. All the Scottish Tory Members can fit into a couple of taxis at present. Some of them, such as the hon. Members for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), got home by the skin of their teeth, so it is not inconceivable that the Scottish Tories might be down to zero representation in the House. Would they seriously argue in such a situation that this precious United Kingdom and the unity of this Parliament demand that in a Scottish Standing Committee there ought to be, say, nine English Tories and perhaps only six or seven Members representing Scottish constituencies? That is the logic of what some of them have said tonight. If that is what they are proposing, they are in a sense endangering the very unity of the United Kingdom that they claim to defend.

Although there is not a majority who wish to set up a Scottish state, many people in Scotland feel that this place is unwilling to respond to their legitimate demands for a devolved Scottish Parliament with legislative and economic powers and even to the smallest of their demands. Indeed, it changes the rules and shifts the goal posts time and again. I warn those Tory Members who come in here on the tap of the Whip, including those who have not even listened to the debate, that if they go into the Lobby in support of the motion, they will weaken the unity that they pretend to defend.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 121.

Division No. 284] **[12.05 am**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baldry, Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don

Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr Allen McKay and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That the proviso to paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees) shall apply to the First Scottish Standing Committee in respect of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill with the substitution of the word 'fifteen' for the word 'sixteen' in line 27 of the Standing Order.

PETITION

Immigration Bill

12.15 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I wish to present a petition from 1,200 residents of Tyneside who are concerned about the implications of the Immigration Bill for people of black and other ethnic minority backgrounds, believing that the implementation of the Bill will be racist. They therefore ask the House to re-examine the Bill in the light of submissions from the Commission for Racial Equality and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. I am happy, as an hon. Member concerned about the right to family unity of my constituents, particularly from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Hong Kong, to add my support to their petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Channel Tunnel

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

12.16 am

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I welcome the opportunity tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which was kindly fixed by your office at a late hour, to raise on the Adjournment of the House the question of the implications of Government policy on the development of the Channel tunnel. It is a subject of such continuing importance that no hon. Member would disagree with its being debated. I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to your officials who were instrumental in helping us to secure this Adjournment debate tonight. I am also grateful to the Minister for Public Transport for coming to the House at this late hour to answer some of the points that I wish to make in the time available to me.

Although this is an unusual Adjournment debate opportunity, the subject itself is not in any way unusual or esoteric. It is probably one of the most important subjects facing us in this country at present and for the next few years. I suppose that all major transport projects are in that category of importance and primordial significance for the nation, but this is the dramatic, epoch-making undertaking that we see developing in what appears to be a satisfactory way and has long since been settled in a treaty with the French, with the backing of private finance. It is a unique achievement and is much to be admired, even by those who originally believed that an element of public expenditure would also be required. This colossal exercise has been carried out with relatively great facility by the financial institutions of both countries and by the investing public.

It now appears that the two companies in the Anglo-French consortium are proceeding satisfactorily with their massive construction project. The real digging is about to take place. Although this is not a direct Government responsibility, I am sure that my hon. Friend monitors closely the progress made by the Transmanche consortium. He may, therefore, wish to refer to that aspect and say how he believes, from the British and French Governments' vantage point, the project is proceeding.

I recently visited the French end of the diggings, which was, in some ways, a historical visit. It was dramatic to see the commencement of the tunnel diggings on the French side, because, after all, the French started with the disadvantage of not having an original opening as we had from the previously aborted project. I am sure that the House will agree that the project is essential for a host of crucial reasons, particularly for this country and economically.

Perhaps I can crystallise those reasons by stating that this is a physical link to the continent. Those of us who welcome that link for a variety of reasons do not just welcome it as a transport project per se; it is a tremendously important psychological and physical link. It will be the end of this country being literally an island nation, although not of the robust aspects of our island history and tradition, but of the more positive aspects of our working as a part of an increasingly united European Community.

The project is also very important from a bilateral perspective because it brings France and Britain closer together, not simply because there will be a rail tunnel but

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more in terms of the growing co-operation between the two Governments, no matter what the complexion of the French Government may be after the second round of the elections in a week or two. There will be growing co-operation between the two Administrations with all the things that the two countries need to do together in the EEC and other bilateral aspects.

The project is vital for the internal market in the EEC beginning in 1992 and launched by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Young in another place. The project is a massive and dramatic development. This transport project, like other transport links that are much easier for our continental colleagues to achieve on land, is to be welcomed as part of the developing internal market. The transport and communications in that market will be almost as important as the intrinsic economic activity of manufacturing and services.

The project enhances the role of the railways. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), I have not been content to see the railways downgraded. I do not believe that that has been the intention of Conservative Governments, but it has appeared to be the case. I am glad that the railways will have a tremendous boost and enhancement from this dramatic and exciting project.

All hon. Members are beginning to talk in the Tea Room and elsewhere about what I call the sudden congestion syndrome on overcrowded motorways. For example, the M25 is already over-full and we are talking about extra lanes for a road that was built only a few years ago. All the problems facing the major motorway networks, the A roads and the congestion in the south lead us to recognise that we must develop the railways, particularly on the crucial long distance routes, for freight and passengers.

The project will help the whole of the United Kingdom's economy. I think that I can say with confidence that it will not destroy the future of the ferries and hovercrafts. However, it will reduce their oligopolistic powers. That will be of crucial benefit to the public. I hope that a more immediate effect—and this is not part of the Adjournment debate tonight—is that the Dover dispute will be solved and that the National Union of Seamen will see the wisdom and sense of obeying the law and coming up to date with the modern practices proposed by a company that is not being oppressive in the way that the secretary of the NUS is trying to portray.

Other long-term developments will be very beneficial. Like others, I hope to see an end to duty-free goods which have provided enormous profits for the ferry operators and others, but have not been in the genuine public interest.

There are many aspects of this massive project that still cause interest and even anxiety about how it will shape up. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, although it is not a direct central Government responsibility, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give the Government's view on how the companies are faring in the consortium and how the Government, in so far as they have a relationship with that massive construction exercise on both sides of the Channel, will respond to the overtures and requests from the consortium for the necessary Government relationship for the success of that private financial project which inevitably means Government involvement in the sense of the infrastructure surrounding the first ever Channel tunnel.

The Government's commitment is important. My hon. Friend the Minister has alluded to these matters on previous occasions and we have been grateful to him for what he has said. He appears to be the champion of a considerable commitment in future for all the things that come only within the purview of public finance and Government activity. It is time for us to reinforce and enhance those utterances that will underline the Government's commitment of infrastructural money. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will help me, my hon. Friends and others about the latest thinking on the need for a high-speed rail link. My hon. Friend may recall that even in the last week there have been important allusions made to that aspect by the British representatives and directors of the Channel tunnel consortium when they said that the railway problem must be resolved, and the sooner the better. There is little time left for those crucial decisions to be made. Still no decision has been made on the British side and the French, with their TGV operation, are apparently expressing concern and asking how the British Government intend responding.

I do not want to see a situation where our image is severely and adversely dented by passengers replete with stories of gliding at high speed from Paris to Calais, and then using the excellent Channel tunnel facilities that are now being planned, only to find themselves lumbering along at a painful 45 or 50 mph journey from Dover to London because we did not sort out the problems. That is a peril and a danger that faces us unless we come to grips with the matter.

How will that high-speed rail link be devised to ensure that the British TGV equivalent syndrome train will be satisfactorily deployed between Dover and London? I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the alternative would have a catastrophic consequence. That affects also the development of Waterloo station and how it will be linked with the planned massive property and rail head and with the new Underground station planned by British Rail at King's Cross, linking with St. Pancras. I believe that that will be the biggest single-property development in Europe—bigger, for example, than the planned development over the Quartier-Leopold station in Brussels.

That crucial question is reinforced by all the other comparisons being made with what is being spent on infrastructure by the French Government, admittedly in a development zone. We appreciate that that is a crucial difference. The French development is in a classic development zone which has suffered economic hardship, whereas ours is in the congested south-east.

I hope that my hon. Friends with constituencies in Kent, with whom we sympathise, will understand that, although they may naturally be worried about the environmental and human depredations that would come from large-scale development of high-speed rail links, and about what would happen as a result of the full development of Ashford International—which is supposed to be the future clearance centre—they cannot hold up the whole of that progress, as that would be detrimental to the interests of the rest of the United Kingdom's economy.

Also crucial is the need to ensure that we do that which the Government have been very successful at doing in other areas internally—perhaps not the elimination of

bureaucracy and officialdom in connection with the movement of passengers and freight through the Channel tunnel, but at least a reduction so that they are not a barrier to trade and to the progress of passenger through-trains or shuttles using the tunnel.

I recall the original research note in the Library dated 3 June 1986 in which reference was made to the Bill and to all the matters which flowed from it and to the treaty. In respect of the powers given, it made mention in paragraph 2 on page 8 of

"provision being made under the Bill to make orders, subject to parliamentary consent, which would give customs, immigration and other officials who traditionally carry out checks at points of entry into the UK full powers of inspection and, as appropriate, of detention and seizure at the frontier post in France."

Anxiety about drugs and recent horrific terrorist events understandably make us feel reluctant to surrender those powers. However, if there is an excess of bureaucracy and officialdom—and the union of European Customs officials must be one of the strongest unions in Europe, although various national unions are linked together—that will have a self-defeating effect on the economic movement of freight, passengers, holidaymakers and leisure travellers through the tunnel. That would be very counter-productive and would give the whole venture a bad name.

I ask my hon. Friend to say what he feels will be the balance of advantages between the north and the south. I hope he will say that the tunnel will not be just a southern privilege but will have major positive effects on the northern parts of the United Kingdom's economy. With those remarks, I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to initiate this brief Adjournment debate.

12.29 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): It is doubly appropriate that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) should raise the subject of the Channel tunnel in this Adjournment debate. First, it is appropriate because he is a doughty supporter of the Common Market and closer European unity. There is no doubt that the tunnel will act as a great distance-shrinker and a powerful adhesive to bind together the economies of Britain and the Continent. Secondly, it is appropriate because he has chosen the right moment to invite me to take stock of progress on the Channel tunnel's construction and of the likely consequences when it opens.

My hon. Friend will, I think, be glad to know that the total value of orders on offer from the purchasing arm of the tunnel contractors, and for British Rail rolling stock, is not far short of £1,000 million. The regions, particularly Scotland and the north, have done very well in securing a major share of the orders, not least in Glasgow. I am sure that that will be warmly welcomed by many hon. Members.

Construction is now pressing ahead. The distances under the English Channel achieved by the first Beaumont tunnel, which was started by the London and South-Eastern railway, and that by the second, abortive 1973 tunnel, have both been exceeded, and drilling is progressing further out under the Channel, towards the French coast. No one need now doubt that in due course the French and British tunnels will be safely linked.

When the Channel tunnel opens for business in 1993 it will be complemented by a superb system of access roads. I think that my hon. Friend will be interested to know, as no doubt will other hon. Members, just how comprehensive that access road network will be. The M20 is to be widened at Maidstone, and the gap to Ashford is to be filled. As a result, a three-lane motorway will stretch from the M25 to the mouth of the tunnel.

Sections of the M25 are being improved, and we are pressing ahead with legislation for the new Dartford-Thurrock bridge, which —like the Channel tunnel—will be a product of private enterprise. For local roads in Kent we have so far accepted six Channel tunnel-related schemes from Kent county council for transport supplementary grant. They are expected to cost £34 million in total. In that connection, it may be appropriate to pay tribute to the work done by Councillor Michael Odling, chairman of the transportation resources committee of Kent county council, who has certainly been a tough negotiator—on behalf of his county council—with my colleagues and me in the Department of Transport, making certain that Kent has fully honoured the undertakings given on ensuring that its own county programme did not suffer as a result of the urgent needs for road access to the Channel tunnel.

All in all, the business communities—large and small —and their representatives, ranging from the CBI to the Small Business Bureau, can feel fully reassured that access to the tunnel by road will be fast, safe and economic. I am glad to have the opportunity to put those facts on the record.

What about rail access? My hon. Friend raised a number of pertinent questions. I can give the House only a part of the story, but the part itself is reassuring. The Government have given British Rail approval in principle to spend £550 million—£250 million on rolling stock and about £300 million on infrastructure. British Rail is satisfied that when the tunnel opens in 1993 there will be sufficient capacity to meet the obligations that it has undertaken with SNCF.

Of course, as in so many rail operations, there will be two peaks. However, as the journey from Paris to London takes about three hours, and the journey from Brussels to London about two and three quarter hours, people catching trains on the continent between 6 am and 7 am will arrive after the peak of commuter services coming into London in the morning. In the afternoon there is more difficulty, more congestion and a greater desire by everyone to leave at the same time. However, it will be possible for British Rail, by using more than one route from London to Folkestone, to achieve what is required at the time of opening.

My hon. Friend rightly raised the question of what happens when traffic builds up. Hon. Members will know that I chaired a joint consultation committee which meets in Kent and consists of members of Kent county council, the district councils involved, the Departments of Employment, Environment and Transport together with British Rail, the Channel tunnel promoters and TML, which is carrying out the construction. This committee looks at the problems and the opportunities, and at how to maximise the opportunities for Kent and minimise the disadvantages.

The committee set up a special impact study team, which has now reported. It examined the impact of the tunnel on rail services in Kent, and it concluded that by the mid-1990s there will be no capacity between London and the tunnel for further growth in commuter traffic or for the progressive development of international services. The

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study noted that British Rail is already engaged in a detailed assessment of options for augmenting route, seating and terminal capacity.

I have asked the board to let me have the result of its assessment in June this year. It is using outside consultants to assist in the study, and my hon. Friend will be as keenly interested as I am to see the results of that study when they are received in June. I should like to speculate on what the report might contain, but there has been enough speculation already and it might be better if we wait for the report in June and consider it on its merits. I have no doubt that the Transport 2000 conference which is taking place in York on 17 June will provide an opportunity for taking stock of the options.

I turn from the construction of the tunnel and the developments that one can foresee as being necessary to say something about the tunnel in operation, in answer to the points made by my hon. Friend. As he rightly observed, there are now limited choices for those who wish to cross the Channel. One can go by air, which is expensive. Indeed, when one compares an air fare to New York by Virgin Atlantic Airways with the air fares to some European destinations, one gets an uncomfortable feeling that liberalisation in Europe still has a long way to go in achieving for the customer the benefits of competition in air services, and Channel ferry services make it the most expensive international waterway per mile in the world.

As my hon. Friend will know, the cornerstone of the Government's transport policy is to provide choice and competition, because they are the customer's best friends, and that applies not only in a multitude of transactions in which we are customers, but to transport services.

One of the benefits of the Channel tunnel will be that those two choices of going by air or sea will become four choices. People will be able to drive down the three-lane motorway to the tunnel entrance, put their cars on a shuttle and be whisked through the tunnel in half an hour. Coaches will no doubt do the same, providing an inexpensive form of transport for many thousands of people, fanning out over the European continent, and bringing large numbers of tourists from the continent to visit many of Britain's attractions, some of which are too little known. There is still much to be done to make them known to the wider continental market.

Secondly, and more fundamentally, there is the direct rail link for passengers from Waterloo to the Gare du Nord in Paris, or to Brussels, and that rail link will connect into the Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne network of high-speed trains throughout Europe.

There will be two principal categories of beneficiaries in Britain. First, there will be those who travel to the continent by shuttle and onwards by Motorail or high-speed electric trains. British Rail forecast that the number of passengers travelling through the tunnel will be between 13·4 million and 15·9 million in 1993, going up to 17·4 million to 20·8 million in 2003.

Secondly, it is in the carriage of freight that the greatest benefits will come to our economy. There will be substantial benefits to manufacturers, particularly in the north. My hon. Friend asked me about the way in which I saw such benefits coming. Nearly 65 per cent. of our exports go to the continent. It is expected that British Rail will move between 6·1 million and 7·2 million tonnes by rail in 1993, and that that will go up to between 7 million and 11·5 million tonnes by 2003.

What is fascinating is that, although there have been environmental "disbenefits", particularly in the Folkestone area, where the terminal will be located, one of the profound benefits is that once British Rail is linked into the continental rail system it will be able to compete effectively with the roads on the longer distances that rail will provide. British Rail expects that no fewer than 1,500 juggernauts a day will be taken off the roads on to the rail system, with substantial benefits for those who live alongside the roads so relieved.

I say clearly and emphatically that British exporters in the north of Britain suffer enormously from the disadvantage of distance and the Channel tunnel will be the big distance shrinker. They will be put on comparative terms when competing with their continental competitors who have land frontiers when the rail link connects all the major industrial areas of Britain to their customer areas on the continent. That is something to which we should all look forward, particularly the people in the north.

I thank my hon. Friend for raising this subject on the Adjournment, even at this late hour, and giving me the opportunity of reporting progress. I hope that he will feel pleased with the progress that I have been able to report tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 May 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (BARROW) BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time Tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bophuthatswana

1. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the consequences of his policy of non-recognition of Bophuthatswana for those who live within its boundaries.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Bophuthatswana is part of the Republic of South Africa and we treat those who live within its boundaries accordingly.

Mr. Watts: Why does my right hon. Friend persist in treating Bophuthatswana as an integral part of South Africa? Bearing in mind this country's historical responsibility for the absorption of Southern Botswana into South Africa, why does she refuse to assist the development of a democratic, free enterprise, multi-racial and apartheid-free society in Bophuthatswana?

Mrs. Chalker: We do not refuse to help those from Bophuthatswana. They are helped by the schemes that go to all black South Africans. Bophuthatswana's claim to independence is hardly borne out by the recent coup and the South African Government's response. The words of the South African President are particularly apt. After that coup he said:

"We are back in charge. I mean, the President of Bophuthatswana is back in charge."

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that the present policy, which allows discrimination against a school for deaf children in Kutlwanong and permits the students to go to the Silent Games as spectators rather than participants, is not in keeping with a caring community and the world at large?

Mrs. Chalker: I regret to say that the hon. Gentleman is right, but that is part of apartheid. It was under the system of grand apartheid that the homelands were set up.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Is my right hon. Friend aware that after five years of drought Bophuthatswana has been able to feed its population every year? With a little aid the people of Bophuthatswana could expand their irrigation system and feed the people of Mozambique, who are starving.

Mrs. Chalker: Food is growing well in Mozambique, but it is part of the policy of the Government of South Africa, as they have clearly revealed, to keep Bophuthatswana part of the South African Republic. On that basis, I hope that the people of Bophuthatswana will feed themselves, but there is no question at the present time of the South African Republic sending food to Mozambique.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister accept that we agree with her—[HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman would."]—that any claim to Bophuthatswana being independent and sovereign has been wholly exposed and exploded by the military intervention by Pretoria? Does the right hon. Lady agree that it would be wrong to give any hint of recognition to this gerrymandered creation of President Verwoerd's Bantustan policy?

Mrs. Chalker: It is clear from everything that has occurred in recent months that the South African Republic regards Bophuthatswana and the other homelands as part of its territory. Although it may not be particularly appealing to my colleagues on the Conservative Back Benches that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me, I am going on the basis of what the South African Government say, the way in which the homelands were set up and the way in which people may mix in the homelands, but those black people from the homelands do not have the same rights to mix in the Republic of South Africa outside the homelands.

Kuwait

2. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Kuwaiti relations.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Our relations with Kuwait are long established and very good.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Kuwaiti Government showed commendable courage in standing up to the terrorists who hijacked their 747? Will he say what success the Kuwaitis and his Department have had in bringing those despicable terrorists to justice? Do the Government know whether Iran was involved in that outrageous attack on civil liberties?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend in commending the firm line taken by the Kuwaiti Government throughout the hijacking. The House would commend in particular the magnificently courageous conduct of the captain of the aircraft.

The House will share my concern that the hijackers appear to have been allowed to go free, which is why we are putting forward a series of proposals to tighten international co-operation against hijacking. There has been much speculation about the degree and nature of Iranian involvement. We continue to examine that evidence closely, because it gives rise to grave concern.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I raise a question that I have repeatedly raised on the Floor of the House. Does the

Secretary of State recall the undertaking given by the Kuwaiti Investment Office in London, when its holding in BP was but 14 per cent., that it would not increase it? Is it not clear that it has breached undertakings given to the Government? What do the Government intend to do? Will they ignore those breaches and allow the Kuwaiti Investment Office to secure a takeover, perhaps into hostile hands, of a major British company?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will realise that, essentially, that is a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: And the right hon. and learned Gentleman, as it affects foreign affairs.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Wait for it. My right hon. and noble Friend has decided to refer the Kuwaiti shareholding in BP to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That was announced by the Office of Fair Trading at 9 am today.

Mr. Pawsey: Notwithstanding the previous question and answer, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that the friendly relations to which he referred between the United Kingdom and Kuwait are being undermined by the referral of the Kuwaiti stake to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Does he agree that the calling in of the planning application for London Bridge City, despite the fact that it had been approved by the London Docklands Development Corporation, is also to some extent undermining his efforts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that at such short notice I am not qualified to comment on activities affecting a planning application, even in relation to one of my favourite statutory corporations, the London Docklands Development Corporation. As to the more substantial point understandably raised by my hon. Friend, we see no reason why the decision taken by my right hon. and noble Friend should affect Anglo-Kuwaiti relations, which have always been very close. That was clearly demonstrated during the Kuwaiti hijacking, and we hope that they will remain so.

Guatemala

3. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions were sent to the British embassy in Guatemala in connection with the return of the Guatemalan exiles on Monday 18 April.

12. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions were sent to the British embassy in Guatemala in connection with the return of the Guatemalan exiles on Monday 18 April.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): Her Majesty's ambassador was requested to monitor the situation carefully and to keep us informed of developments.

Mr. Patchett: Is the Minister satisfied that the right action was taken on 18 April with regard to the Guatemalan exiles, bearing in mind the Guatemalan Government's shocking human rights record?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, I am entirely satisfied that the right action was taken. Two of the returning exiles were arrested, examined and released by the examining magistrate.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am surprised that the Minister did not have the courtesy to notify me before Question Time that my question was being linked with question No. 3. I am sure that it was an oversight:

When the exiles returned they were under the impression that human rights had not improved in Guatemala. Inasmuch as the Arias peace plan puts emphasis on human rights as well as other matters, does the Minister not think that he should make strenuous representations to the Guatemalan Government to ensure that the peace plan, particularly the part relating to human rights, is implemented?

Mr. Eggar: I apologise unreservedly to the hon. Gentleman. I remember being annoyed when I was in a similar position, and I shall look into the matter.

The question of human rights in Guatemala is raised regularly at ministerial level with our Guatemalan counterparts. Human rights violations decreased sharply in 1986, but there has been a regrettable increase in murders and kidnappings over the past 15 months. It is not clear how far these incidents are politically motivated, but we pay considerable attention to the United Nations special expert who reported in March that there had been an improvement in the human rights situation and noted that the present Guatemalan Government do not sanction violations of human rights.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Would it not be rather unfortunate if the House took a partisan opinion on the internal politics of Guatemala, particularly when the democratic Government of Guatemala, under President Cerezo, is having to take a delicate line between the military on the one hand and the Left wing on the other?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend draws attention to some of the complexities that have to be taken into account when one is considering events in Guatemala. None the less, I know he will agree with me that we have the right, under the various UN conventions, to comment on human rights abuses.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Will my hon. Friend outline to the House the measures that Her Majesty's Government are taking to promote the survival of democracy in Guatemala?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend is aware that there were democratic elections, and since that time we have been able to resume diplomatic relations with Guatemala for the first time in 24 years. We have had regular contacts with Guatemalan Ministers and with the ambassador here.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister may be aware that I went to Guatemala with those returning exiles. Does he accept that there is a considerable body of opinion inside Guatemala, not from those who have a political bias but from those such as Church groups who operate on the ground, which says that the human rights situation and the atrocities and murders, once one is outside the urban areas and into the rural areas, are just as bad as ever, and that those atrocities are committed by the forces of the state, particularly the army? Will he make sure that the British Government note that fact, because the Minister has given

the impression that he wants to distance himself from the view that the violence is Government-inspired? The reality is that agencies of the Guatemalan Government are still actively involved in the atrocities.

Mr. Eggar: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has the advantage of having visited Guatemala, and I trust that he did so with an open mind and talked to a number of people right across the spectrum. I would expect no less from him. I must ask him to take account of the United Nations' special expert's report on human rights in Guatemala. He reported to the United Nation's Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and, as I have already made clear, he noted some improvement in the human rights situation and stated that the present Government do not sanction violations. If we believe in furthering the cause of human rights through the United Nation's machinery, we must pay attention to reports from its experts.

Hanover Summit

4. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues are expected to arise at the forthcoming Hanover summit.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The agenda for the European Council meeting in Hanover will be set by the German presidency. No formal proposals have yet been made, but completion of the single market is expected to be the main item of discussion.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many hon. Members on both sides of the House view with dismay the prospective replacement of the British passport with the European Community passport? Is he also aware that the day of the nation state is not yet over, and that some hon. Members view with equal dismay the prospect of the submersion of our country into a European superstate? Will he raise those matters at the Hanover summit?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am aware that there is a wide range of feeling about the different pace and pattern that can be followed in the development of the European Community. My hon. Friend will know that the original agreement that there should be a common format passport was made as long ago as 1975 by the then Labour Prime Minister. The common format was agreed as long ago as 1981.

The idea of having a common format, machine-readable passport is that it will substantially speed up movement across frontiers. No fewer than 25 million British citizens travel abroad every year now—about five times as many as 20 years ago. The new machine-readable British passport is a national passport. It will continue to be issued under the royal prerogative. I think that it would be undesirable to try to operate the old and new systems together, as that would greatly increase costs and reduce efficiency.

Mr. Benn: Will defence questions come up at the Hanover summit and will the Foreign Secretary clarify the view of Her Majesty's Government on whether Denmark's policy of refusing to allow ships with nuclear weapons into its ports is compatible with membership of NATO?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is quite possible that questions affecting European security will be discussed between heads of state at the European summit, because such questions form part of the agenda of the European political co-operation agreement. There is even closer interest in Denmark because of our common membership of NATO, and we have made it plain that any policy adopted by the Danish, or any other, Government that makes it impossible to maintain our "not confirm—not deny" policy on Royal Navy vessels would result in serious consequences for possible further co-operation within NATO.

Mr. Aitken: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his first answer will give considerable disquiet in the House and the country, because it is a long time since we heard a British Conservative Foreign Secretary sheltering behind the combination of Sir Harold Wilson's coat tails and pure Eurowaffle? Will he reconsider the whole question of the loss of the British passport, which will strike a chord far wider than EEC enthusiasts may recognise?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I really must invite my hon. Friend to consider the matter in a rather wider perspective. There is no question of my sheltering behind anyone's coat tails —least of all Sir Harold Wilson's.

Mr. Robertson: Lord Wilson.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sorry. I mean Lord Wilson of Rievaulx—the right hon. and noble Lord.

The matter has been part of the agreed agenda of the EC for 12 years, and work has been proceeding on it for seven years. It will lead to a very substantial advantage, and the passport will remain a British passport issued under the royal prerogative.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that consideration is given at the Hanover summit to the Community programme for assistance to victims of apartheid, to which 25 million ecu has been allocated for this year and which would be vitiated by the orderly internal politics Bill now before the South African Parliament? That Bill would allow the South African Government to declare organisations to which the Community provides money to be restricted organisations and to seize Community money. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is essential that such a measure be opposed by the Community? Does he also agree that if the measure goes through, thus vitiating a peaceful Community programme of assistance to the anti-apartheid movement, the only alternative—even for him—will be mandatory economic sanctions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman spoilt an otherwise quite sensible questions by his irresistible urge to advocate sanctions in his last phrase. That matter has nothing to do with the substance or merit of his argument. I entirely agree that if legislation came into effect in South Africa that would vitiate positive measures initiated under the Community programme or any other, it would be a result much to be deplored. As soon as the matter became known to us—some weeks ago —the Foreign Ministers of the Community did, indeed, discuss it, and we have been engaged in close consultations ever since, with a view to making representations to the South African Government to prevent the outcome that the right hon. Gentleman fears. We shall continue to do that.

Air Piracy

5. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the Foreign Ministers of the European Community, the United States of America and other countries to discuss measures to combat air piracy.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): My right hon. and learned Friend raised the question of the Kuwait airlines hijack and its aftermath with his European Community colleagues in Luxembourg on 25 April. We shall also be discussing this in the Summit Seven machinery. The British delegation to the International Civil Aviation Organisation raised the issue there on 26 April.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Does he agree that one of the problems facing the international community is the lack of an international force such as our own SAS, the GSG9 or Delta Force, that could tackle piracies when they occur? It is vital that either such a force is set up under the control of the United Nations or that such a force could be called upon by the UN to deal with piracies.

Mr. Mellor: I understand why my hon. Friend suggests that, but our view is that such a force would not be a practical proposition. My right hon. and learned Friend put forward a number of ideas in the five-point plan and one development that we are working towards is the establishment of a group of experts who would be able to advise a Government who find themselves in a situation such as that which confronted the Government of Cyprus on the best practice to handle a hijacking. We do not believe that the international force that my hon. Friend advocates is a practical proposition at this time.

Mr. Corbett: Given that the talks are likely to consider other aspects of terrorism, will the Minister explain to his colleagues why his right hon. and learned Friend is today trying to lean on the chairman of the BBC to try to stop BBC Ulster Television showing a programme about events in Gibraltar which involved Irish terrorists, which follows the heavy-handed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about air piracy.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my hon. and learned Friend give serious consideration to making available to the public the recordings that the British authorities presumably took in Cyprus of conversations between the air pirates and the authorities in Iran?

Mr. Mellor: I shall think about what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Robertson: We welcome the initiative that has been taken, especially on the possibility of a specialised negotiating force. When the Minister has the opportunity to discuss air piracy and terrorism with his colleagues, will he also ponder the effect on controlling terrorism in Europe of any wholesale abolition of frontier controls in the 1992 package? Should we not re-examine any such impossibilist idea? Why on earth should we seek to make it easier for terrorists to float around from country to country and escape any form of justice?

Mr. Mellor: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Indeed, I recall being extremely troubled about the similar issue of the flow of drugs through the European Community, given that, unfortunately, one or two of our neighbouring states have not had the same success in controlling the warehousing of drugs in their countries as we have had. I am glad to say that we retain complete power to intervene at our frontiers, and after 1992 we will continue to have the power to check for imports of drugs or terrorism or for anything that is a criminal offence in this country.

Middle East

6. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Secretary of State of the United States of America to discuss middle east problems.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We keep in very close touch with the United States Administration on middle east affairs. I next expect to meet Mr. Shultz at the North Atlantic Council meeting on 9-10 June.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that the Shultz initiative for Israel and the Palestinians is very much on the table and alive? Despite the recent depressing developments on both sides the best opportunities lie in those initiatives, supported by the European powers, because the choice for Israel and the Palestinians remains starkly between the dead end myopic tunnel of Mr. Shamir's outlook and the possibilities and ideas of Mr. Weizman, Secretary Shultz and others for a real breakthrough and a real, durable peace and negotiations with the Palestinians.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the status quo holds no answers for either side in a dispute which has lasted for so long. It is important to accelerate progress towards a just, durable, negotiated settlement. United Nations Security Council resolution 242, which embodies the "land for peace" principle, is an essential element. I discussed these matters briefly with Mr. Shultz when I met him in Brussels on 25 April. We fully support his vigorous efforts to inject new impetus into the peace process.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Foreign Secretary knew, because I made the point clear during Foreign Affairs Question Time in March, that the mission of Secretary of State Shultz would grind to a halt because he and the Foreign Secretary refused to speak directly to the Palestine Liberation Organisation. There is no way that the peace talks can move forward unless Her Majesty's Government and, more important, the United States Government, are prepared to talk to one of the main parties involved in the dispute. Instead of referring continually to a resolution that does not mention the Palestinians, the Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State Shultz should speak direct to the Palestinians and their representatives, the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our position on this matter is clear. There is regular dialogue at official level with the PLO. The PLO is aware of those aspects of its policy which make renewed ministerial contact difficult. We do not accept that the PLO will be the sole representative of the Palestinians. We accept its right to be associated with the peace process and have taken a number of steps to bring that about.

Mr. Walters: Is not the position in the Lebanon extraordinary? Does Israel have some unique dispensation to invade and maraud in the lands of its neighbours, to slaughter civilians in the territories that it occupies, and to assassinate its opponents in sovereign countries, such as Tunisia? Is it not time that this behaviour was brought to a halt? Given that the Shultz initiative appears to have failed, will my right hon. and learned Friend look sympathetically at Signor Craxi's suggested European initiative to see how it could be advanced?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that it is premature to conclude that the injection of new energy into the peace process initiated by the United States Administration has run its course. I share my hon. Friend's anxiety that it should be maintained. I agree with his judgment that the latest Israeli raid into Lebanon should be condemned. So, too, should the Palestinian incursions into Israel which preceded that raid. Violence offers no solution. It is essential that both sides address themselves to the matter on the basis of the well-known principles.

We share the widespread sense of horror at the senseless act of terrorism that led to the death of Abu Jihad in Tunis on 26 April. The Israeli Government have offered no comment on who was responsible for that act.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Foreign Secretary, together with Mr. Shultz, make it clear to the Israeli Government that the current incursion into the Lebanon will have no greater success than the three-year ill-fated Israeli invasion of the Lebanon in ending Palestinian action against the Israelis? The only way in which Palestinian action against the Israelis can be ended is through a peaceful settlement involving the Palestinians. The only way to achieve that is by the Israelis having the good sense to follow the advice of their Foreign Minister, Mr. Peres, who wants an international conference. As has been put to me strongly, a conference is also wanted by King Hussein of Jordan, the President of Egypt, the Secretary General of the Arab League and all the other Arabs to whom I have spoken. Is it not about time that Mr. Shamir was told that the secure future of Israel can be obtained only by his stepping aside from his policy and agreeing to an international conference?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad to agree with all that the right hon. Gentleman has said. It is important that there should be complete realisation that the Israeli military presence in the Lebanon is provocative and wholly contrary to Israel's long term interests. It is necessary for Israel to withdraw completely from south Lebanon and allow UNIFIL to deploy to the international border in accordance with Security Council resolution 425. Beyond that, it is of the utmost importance that Israel, together with the other participants, should seek a settlement of this long-running tragic conflict on the basis of the principles that have been endorsed time after time by the international community. I say that as a staunch friend of Israel throughout the 40 years of her history and as someone who wants nothing better than to see the survival of Israel in prosperity and security within borders that are universally respected. That can be achieved only if Israel, applying the same principles, is ready to extend similar recognition to the rights of the Palestinian people.

Ethiopia

7. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent ministerial contact there has been with the Ethiopian Government.

Mrs. Chalker: The most recent occasions were when I visited Ethiopia in April 1987 and when my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development did so in January this year. At the request of the Ethiopian Government, his return visit this month has been postponed.

Mr. Mitchell: When my right hon. Friend next meets representatives of the Ethiopian Government, will she make clear the widespread concern in the House and country about the escalation of the civil war in Ethiopia? In particular, will she express our deep concern about the way in which aid and relief agencies are being treated, particularly the United Nations and the Red Cross, the latter of which has been banned from doing the valuable work that it was previously undertaking in that country?

Mrs. Chalker: We greatly regret the escalation in fighting. It is truly a tragic situation. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, there are serious implications for the famine relief operations. We have urged the Ethiopian Government to reconsider their decision. Other donors have made similar representations, and, following the visit to Ethiopia last week of the United Nations Secretary General's envoy, Mr. Ahtisaari, we understand that some expatriate staff of the United Nations world trucking operation in Ethiopia are to be permitted to return to Eritrea to restart operations. We hope that the Ethiopian Government will soon permit a full resumption of relief activities, including those by Red Cross officials. We must remember that half the 7 million people who are at risk from famine are in Eritrea and Tigré.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the Minister confirm that the Ethiopian Government are in possession of the nerve gas Tabun and that Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Ethiopian Government that it should not be used or deployed against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in any circumstances?

Mrs. Chalker: I am interested to hear what the hon. and learned Gentleman says, and I shall look into it further, but we have no evidence that the Ethiopian Government have used or intend to use the weapons. The United Kingdom would unreservedly condemn the use of chemical weapons. I am pleased to say that my hon. and learned Friend was assured by the Soviet ambassador last week that his Government will not supply chemical weapons to Ethiopia, or, we hope, other similar weapons.

Sir Bernard Braine: My right hon. Friend will be aware that, for 13 long years, 10 members of the former imperial family of Ethiopia—seven of them women and most of them in bad health—have been held without trial. So far the military regime has been deaf to pleas from Heads of State and Governments, including our own. Will my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that every step will be taken, in conjunction with other Governments, to bring home to the military regime the iniquity and cruelty of what is being done and not hesitate to bring every pressure to bear to end this gross injustice?

Mrs. Chalker: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on all his efforts to secure the release of the royal prisoners in Ethiopia. He has made many humanitarian efforts, now with the Addis relief campaign, to focus attention on the prisoners. We have made, and we continue to make, repeated representations. That has been going on throughout the years. We very much regret that, in spite of official Ethiopian indications that the royal prisoners would be released last year, they still remain in prison. I can give my right hon. Friend a full assurance that we shall continue to take up the plight of these unfortunate royal prisoners at every suitable opportunity and in conjunction with other Governments.

Sharpeville Six

8. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Republic of South Africa with regard to the case of the Sharpeville Six.

Mrs. Chalker: A defence application for a retrial is currently under consideration. We continue to follow the progress of the case closely and with great concern.

Mr. Pike: As only two of the Sharpeville Six cases hinge on the evidence, which is now suspect, of one witness, will the Government continue to make it clear to the South African Government, and especially their President, that the execution of any of the six will be condemned in the strongest possible terms by the British Government? Will that also be accompanied by a plea for mercy to be shown by the President of South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: I think that it would be helpful to the House if I stated where we now stand on this issue. The legal process has been reopened. The Transvaal district attorney has stated his intention to oppose. The stay of execution has been extended indefinitely. I do not rule out further representations, but I believe that we should await the outcome of the current legal process, which I understand is proceeding.

Mr. John Townend: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House when the Government will apply the same standards and principles to their relations with other African countries, most of which are non-democratic, one-party states, as those to which they seem to apply in their relationship with South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: I have described the situation of the Sharpeville Six on many previous occasions. We believe that the Government of a nation—we recognise states, not Governments—should bring about humanitarian rule. We protest when non-humanitarian actions are taken by the Governments of any countries. Executions in South Africa have meant that we were prepared to consider joining appeals for clemency, but only in cases which were clearly political and in which there were strong humanitarian grounds. That is why we have pursued this path with the Sharpeville Six. I have said this before, and it may be that I shall have to say it again. Matters that come before the courts of South Africa are for the South African Government, but where there are strong humanitarian grounds we have a right to make our views known.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister explain why there are so many Conservative Back Benchers who seem not to care whether the Sharpeville Six hang or do not hang? Will the right hon. Lady explain why this is the position of so many Conservative Back Benchers?

Mrs. Chalker: I am not responsible at the Dispatch Box for Government policy on these issues. It may be that some of my hon. Friends have their own views, which have been formed as a result of their visits to various parts of southern Africa. In trying to make a judgment on these most difficult issues, I shall continue to try to base all my comments and answers on the facts that are before me.

Mr. Forth: Has my right hon. Friend congratulated the South Africans on the patent independence of their judiciary? In the light of her previous comments, has she made a list of all the states and Governments which execute people for political reasons? Has she led the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in making vigorous representations to all those countries along the same lines as those that she has described in the context of the Government's relationship with South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: When a country has a legal process, we expect it to be followed. That applies to South Africa and to any other African or other country in the world. I am glad that the South African Government followed the due legal processes of their country, but the issue has not yet been fully resolved. I say to my hon. Friend that it is easy to stand on the sidelines and to criticise; but it is much more difficult to form a view on the facts of a case and the situation that exists in individual countries, which vary so much. These are matters that warrant much more careful study than some Members of this place sometimes give them.

Israel

9. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has given consideration to applying economic sanctions against Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Economic sanctions would not help to bring about a solution of the problems of the region.

Mr. McTaggart: Given the increasingly dangerous position for civilians in that troubled part of the world, does the Minister agree that Britain, as a member of the European Economic Community, should follow the EEC example and consider introducing economic sanctions against Israel in order to put pressure on Prime Minister Shamir to attend an international conference to try to find a peaceful solution of the problems of that area?

Mr. Mellor: There is no disagreement between the Government and the hon. Gentleman on what we want to see coming out of this, but we certainly disagree with the method that he proposes. We believe that we should try to influence events in the area by working in partnership with fellow members of the European Community. That is why repeated statements have been made by the Foreign Ministers of the European Community condemning the quite indefensible methods that the Israeli defence forces are using in the occupied territories and calling for a political solution based on a recognition of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination as well as a recognition of the right of Israel to exist behind secure boundaries. Statements have also been made to try to promote and

enhance the economic well-being of the people in the occupied territories by allowing their produce access to the European Community on favoured terms, which, I am sad to say, the Israeli Government, in breach of undertakings given to the Community in December, continue to block.

Mr. Lawrence: Apart from the manifest absurdity of taking economic sanctions against a friendly democratic nation, is not the economic sanction of the Arab boycott a substantial obstacle to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem?

Mr. Mellor: That is a further manifestation of the regrettable situation and one that we would like to see changed. That can be changed only if there is a sensible recognition on the part of all states in the region that, sooner or later, they will have to coexist as good neighbours.

Ms. Short: Does the Minister agree that we all have a duty to use our influence to stop the immoral and terrorist behaviour of the Israeli Government in the occupied territories, which distresses hon. Members on both sides of the House? The European market is of great importance to the Israeli state. Israel is currently breaching Europe's request that produce from the occupied territories should have access to the European market. Should we not therefore tighten the screw and use our economic pressure to force the Israeli Government to behave more reasonably?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Lady was quite right in one thing that she said. I do not know of any hon. Members, no matter what they disagree about on other issues, who have visited the occupied territories and not returned with precisely the same point of view as the hon. Lady. That says something about the lamentable situation.

I have already set out the action that we think it proper to take with regard to the European Community. We do not agree that economic sanctions would be appropriate. However, we take very seriously the fact that the Israeli Government are apparently flouting the undertakings that were given to allow produce from the occupied territories to enter Europe unhindered. It was agreed by the Council of Ministers that the new protocols favouring Israeli produce should go forward, but the European Parliament continues to block that, presumably because of the Israelis' failure to keep their side of the bargain. I doubt whether that position will be resolved until there is some movement on the introduction of produce from the occupied territories into the European Community on those proper terms.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's attitude towards sanctions, but there is nothing democratic about Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza or about her behaviour there. In view of America's proven uselessness in this matter, how will my hon. and learned Friend ensure that the views of the Government and of the European Community have some influence on events in the occupied territories?

Mr. Mellor: We have no basis on which to command attention. We can only continue to make our views known in the forums open to us, and we do that. I believe that an increasing number of people in Israel are only too well aware of the grave and, I fear, lasting damage that is being done to Israel's international reputation—not least the lasting damage caused to the prospects for young people in Israel to live a full span in peace—as a result of the shortsighted policies pursued by Mr. Shamir and others.

Nicaragua

10. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America concerning the Nicaraguan Government's negotiations with the Contras.

Mr. Eggar: We have regular discussions with the United States Government on a whole range of issues, including the situation in Central America. They are well aware of our support for a negotiated solution to the problems of the region.

Mr. Galbraith: In his discussions with the American Administration, does the Minister impress on them always that the Contras are terrorists? Has he asked the American Administration to use their influence with the Contras to settle with the Nicaraguan Government and not hang on in the hope that there will be a change in the Administration, so that the Contras may continue their murderous activities?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is not a regular attender at Foreign Affairs Question Time—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry if I have offended the hon. Gentleman. If what I have said is not right, obviously he cannot have listened very carefully to the explanations that we have given of our policy towards Central America. We have consistently advocated a peaceful, negotiated solution to the region's problems, and we have made our views very clear to the United States Government.

Sir Peter Blaker: Has my hon. Friend seen recent reports that a large number of political prisoners—up to 1,000—have been released by the Nicaraguan Government? If they are such a paragon of democracy, why were there so many political prisoners to release, and how many are still in prison?

Mr. Eggar: As usual, my right hon. Friend makes a very good point. The Nicaraguan Government have not always lived up to the Guatemalan accord, which they signed. We are heartened by the progress that has been made and look to the Nicaraguan Government to make even more rapid progress.

Mr. Foulkes: I am astonished that the Minister is unaware that my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) is not only a regular attender at Foreign Affairs Question Time but is an expert on Nicaraguan affairs. He has personally given medical aid in Nicaragua, which is more than any Conservative Member can say.

Will the Minister acknowledge that the progress of the dialogue with the Nicaraguan Government is being blocked by extremists among the Contras, egged on by extremists in the United States—including the President? As the Minister has repeatedly said at the Dispatch Box that the problems of Central America cannot be solved by force but only by peaceful means, will he say what the British Government are doing to help the peace process?

Mr. Eggar: I fully recognise the hon. Gentleman's need to maintain good diplomatic relations with his Scottish colleagues, and I congratulate him on the elegant way in which he has done that.

I say to the hon. Gentleman that it does not do him, the Labour party or the House any good to describe the United States President in the way that he did. I hope that on reflection he will withdraw the words that he used.

The hon. Gentleman should take a more balanced view of the problems of Nicaragua. He might, for example, have criticised instead President Ortega's statement on 13 December that the Sandanistas would not hand over power if they were defeated in an election.

Human Rights

11. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made on human rights at the CSCE.

Mr Mellor: So far, advances have been distinctly modest. When I addressed the Vienna CSCE meeting on 15 April I made it clear that we would not conclude business without much more progress on human rights issues.

Mr. Taylor: Will my hon. and learned Friend convey to Mr. Gorbachev that it is all very well talking about glasnost and perestroika, but that if he wishes to make progress on conventional arms stability talks and on nuclear arms reductions he had better pay attention to the human rights issues at the Vienna review conference and instruct his negotiators to make distinct progress? We are holding ourselves armed against the Soviet Union because we distrust that country's callous disregard for human liberties.

Mr. Mellor: I agree with my hon. Friend. That was the burden of what I said. In particular, there is a gap between what Mr. Gorbachev has said—much of which is very welcome—and what has been carried into law. We look to him to deliver on what he has said he wants to do, and he will have every support from the West in so doing. What we cannot accept is an unbalanced outcome at Vienna. That would sell short all the reasonable aspirations of people in the East who were given such hope by the Helsinki accord.

Mr. James Lamond: Is it not a fact, however, that the Soviet Union has done its very best to make progress on humanitarian affairs by suggesting that the Soviets themselves host a special international conference on the matter? Has not the West dragged its feet and answered that request by suggesting that every non-governmental organisation that wishes to go along should have the right to go to such a conference—and even that the Voice of Free Europe should be allowed to participate?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is an astonishingly tolerant observer of the Soviet scene. I can only say that if he really thinks that it is an answer to the sustained and continuing human rights abuses in the Soviet Union for people to go to Moscow and just talk about it, his tolerance does him little credit.

Ethiopia

13. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he is giving to British citizens intending to visit Ethiopia in the light of the information available to him about the internal conflict in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We advise British citizens not to visit the rural areas of Tigré and Eritrea, where hostilities continue.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my right hon. Friend for her reply. Do not those who would excite Western liberal guilt about Ethiopia miss the point that the principal scourge of its rural people is the Ethiopian Government?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That has been a serious problem in Ethiopia, particularly for those who have tried to make a way of life for themselves and been prevented from doing so. At present, while some areas are indeed safe, others are suffering from attacks by the Ethiopian Government on their liberation fronts. I believe that the continued military position, with sporadic fighting in places all over the country, but mainly in the north, can do no good for the people of Ethiopia, and certainly will not advance the cause of the Ethiopian Government one iota.

Afghanistan

14. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards relations with Afghanistan after the Afghanistan settlement; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We welcome the Geneva agreement of 14 April and the prospect of withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, but the regime in Kabul remains a Soviet client. We therefore have no plans to raise the level of our dealings with it.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the remarkable generosity and steadfastness of the Pakistani Government in giving homes to no fewer than 5 million Afghan refugees should now be recognised? What can he do to establish the reintegration of those people into Afghanistan, as they wish to be integrated, but on their own terms as practising Muslims, not as Communist sympathisers? What account will he take of Amnesty International's serious condemnation of the present dealings of the Afghan and Soviet Governments with Afghans seeking to leave Afghanistan in recent years?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree that we must admire the generosity and steadfastness of the Pakistani Government in providing homes for the millions of refugees who fled the brutal war that resulted from the Soviet invasion.

I have, of course, seen the reports of the latest allegations by Amnesty International, and it must be said that they echo the reports of the United Nations special rapporteur in 1988. He portrayed a betrayal of basic human rights on a dramatic scale, with over 14,000 civilian deaths last year, 3,000 political prisoners admitted by the regime, and torture still being used in interrogations. The Soviet withdrawal is directed towards bringing an end to that. Plainly, that withdrawal must be followed by the best

possible way of enabling the Afghan people—including the refugees—to exercise their right of self-determination and of establishing a Government acceptable to them all.

EC Internal Market

15. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures his Department intends to take in the near future to increase the awareness among the general public of the implications of the completion of the European Community internal market in 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: We are playing a full and active part in the single market awareness campaign, launched on 18 April. We shall continue to make the single market a major theme of speeches both at home and abroad and to raise this in regular contacts with business men.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware of the considerable worry among milk producers in Wales, and, indeed, in south-west England and Scotland, about the effect of the single market in 1992? Are any discussions taking place between herself and the three Agriculture Ministers for England, Wales and Scotland about transitional arrangements? Is her Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Welsh Office or the Scottish Office responsible for arranging consultations, seminars and conferences in the United Kingdom on that matter?

Mrs. Chalker: That is really a question for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Guided by him and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, we are doing our very best to ensure that excess production comes down and that there is a sensible move towards the new funding of agriculture which the Community needs.

BILL PRESENTED

Cemeteries (Control of Sale Etc.)

Mr. Harry Greenway, supported by Mr. Robert G. Hughes and Mr. Tony Banks, presented a Bill to control the sale or disposal by local authorities of any land consecrated or used for burials and to terminate the practice of burying more than one person in a single grave: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 158.]

Right to Live

3.31 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide that where two consultants employed within the National Health Service declare that a patient's life will be in grave danger or seriously impaired unless admitted and treated in hospital it shall be the duty of the appropriate Regional Health Authority to immediately provide for the admission to hospital and for the treatment of the said patient; and to make it an offence not so to provide the necessary hospital admission and treatment.

The proposed Bill is concerned with the sanctity of human life—the sanctity of every human life. It seeks to assert in law the ethical proposition that the medical needs of every citizen should be the only criterion for hospital care. In so doing it reverses the existing situation within the NHS where the needs of the patient are secondary to considerations of financial stringency, administrative convenience or Government policy.

It also reverses what I believe to be the uncivilised judgments of the courts that patients who would otherwise die or whose health would be seriously impaired have no right of demand on hospital services because of finite resources. That is not an Act of Parliament passed in this place; it is a judicial precept which I seek to correct.

The need for such an Act of Parliament became apparent in Birmingham when a hospital chairman was instructing consultants not to admit to hospital or to operate upon hole-in-the-heart babies and kidney dialysis patients. That situation still persists in the west midlands, not provoked by direction of hospital chairmen but continued by the imposition of financial rationing. In fact, it is happening all over the country. People are being left to die or to suffer agony while doctors and surgeons are not allowed to work, hospital beds remain empty although they are ready for patients and nursing care is available.

I can give the House some examples from Birmingham and from the west midlands, but I am told that they apply nationwide. At the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham, 80 operations per year for heart bypasses and valve replacements are being postponed. Patients are being discharged prematurely from intensive care units, with very serious consequences. For example, four weeks ago a lady, who was discharged from the intensive care unit had to be readmitted, and I am told that she is now suffering from permanent brain damage.

Every morning in the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham the five consultants in charge of the intensive care unit meet at 8 o'clock and have to decide which patients to discharge prematurely from their unit so as to make room for other seriously ill patients. That is a scandal. No consultant should be placed in that position. I am told that one patient suffering from cancer of the gullet was prepared four times for an operation and on each occasion the operation was postponed. The cancer is now incurable.

All surgeons in the Queen Elizabeth hospital are, by official decree, forced to down tools for one week in seven while 146 beds remain empty. That is the most massive Government-imposed lock-out we have seen in this country for a long time. Surgeons and nurses are being prevented from working on patients who are desperately ill.

At the Sandwell hospital 32 orthopaedic beds have been closed and elderly patients have been left in great pain. The surgeons cannot work but 32 beds are left empty and operating theatres and nursing staff are available. The reason for that is that the hospital cannot afford the cost of the artificial hip joints. That is unforgivable.

In the central district in Birmingham there is an eight-week waiting list for radiotherapy, which is so vital for cancer patients. The *Birmingham Daily News* reported this morning that Dr. Alan Bond, one of the specialists at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, has started to tabulate cases that cannot be dealt with in intensive care. In April alone in that one hospital 15 life-saving operations were cancelled—seven open heart operations, two liver transplants, one kidney transplant, two major vascular operations and three major abdominal operations.

It is reported that one patient was kept waiting for two and a half hours for admission to the intensive care unit. During that time the patient had to be ventilated by hand by the anaesthetist using a pumping bag. That is a condemnation of conditions in the NHS in 1988 under this Government.

As I have said, in the central district there is an eight-week waiting list for radiotherapy. In the North Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield Good Hope hospital it takes 75 weeks before an orthopaedic case is even seen by a doctor before they start waiting for treatment. In the West Birmingham Dudley Road hospital, of which I used to be chairman, the closure of services is intended to achieve contemptible savings. For example, there has been a 20 per cent. reduction in physiotherapy treatment in order to save £13,000. The cervical cytology programme, so much the baby of the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, has been severely reduced in order to save £5,000. How contemptible can we be in this day and age?

I am told that the Dudley Road hospital has had to inform the region that it has stopped all cancer therapy until further funds are available. I can disclose to the House that one consultant has told me that things are so bad that a consultant received a letter from a solicitor asking for treatment for his client and when the matter was taken up with the chairman of the regional hospital authority he was told, "I shouldn't worry about that. I have 1,000 letters or more from solicitors acting on behalf of their clients demanding attention in the west midlands area hospitals." Those letters show how people are plumbing the depths of despair when they require serious treatment.

I have to tell the House that we have a new word in the vocabulary of the west midlands. I had not come across it before. The word is "triage". I am told that it comes from the battlefields of Europe. It is now in common currency among doctors in the west midlands. Triage means looking at the wounded and the ill and putting them into three categories: immediate treatment, to be deferred, or not worth treating. That is the atrocious system now being operated in the west midlands. It means in practice that people over 65—pensioners—are put at the bottom of the queue.

We all sympathise with the dilemma facing the consultants; we do not blame them, but we assert in this measure that every citizen, pensioner and child has a right to equal treatment in the Health Service and in law. The triage system is the classic case of the doctors' dilemma

which I thought had been outlawed since the time of George Bernard Shaw, but it is now, apparently, hallowed practice in our hospitals.

The purpose of this Bill is to assert that when any patient is desperately ill or suffering serious physical pain, be he parent or grandparent, he is of equal worth under the law. The Bill seeks to assert that every citizen is equal in the sight of God and must therefore be declared to be of equal worth in the National Health Service. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Denis Howell, Mr. Roy Hattersley, Mr. Brynmor John, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Giles Radice, Mr. Joseph Ashton and Mr. Terry Davis.

RIGHT TO LIVE

Mr. Denis Howell accordingly presented a Bill to provide that where two consultants employed within the National Health Service declare that a patient's life will be in grave danger or seriously impaired unless admitted and treated in hospital it shall be the duty of the appropriate Regional Health Authority to immediately provide for the admission to hospital and for the treatment of the said patient; and to make it an offence not to provide the necessary hospital admission and treatment: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 13 May and to be printed. [Bill 159.]

Anglo-Irish Conference (Meeting)

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that there is today a meeting of the Anglo-Irish conference and that the agenda is such that the discussions and decisions taken will affect the constituents of every hon. Member. Do you, Sir, know whether it is the intention of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make a statement as soon as possible; or, if not, is it possible for that request to be conveyed to the Leader of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the Leader of the House, who is present, will have heard what has been said.

Legal Aid Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

3.44 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The legal aid White Paper, published in March 1987, began with the words:

"The purpose of legal aid is to ensure that people of small or moderate means receive access to proper legal advice, and to justice."

The Bill gives legislative effect to the main decisions announced in the legal aid White Paper. Its central objective is to improve the arrangements for making legal aid and legal advice and assistance available. Efficiency, effectiveness and value for money are the key concepts which underlie the Bill.

Legal aid in England and Wales is one of the fastest growing areas of Government expenditure. The legal aid scheme is now approaching its 40th year. For the first 20 years expenditure never exceeded £10 million a year and help was provided for a maximum of about 150,000 people. Expenditure on legal aid in England and Wales today is running at an annual rate of about £450 million a year, compared with only £100 million just nine years ago in 1979-80, an increase which far outstrips anything attributable to inflation. In the past year, about 2 million people have received help under the civil or criminal legal aid schemes, or the advice and assistance scheme. That is a measure of the growing importance of the legal aid scheme, and a measure of the importance of the Bill.

The scheme as it exists in England and Wales has developed considerably since its beginnings in the report of the Rushcliffe committee in May 1945 and the Legal Aid and Advice Act 1949, which established the scheme. In 1972, the legal advice and assistance scheme was introduced. In 1974, the legal aid legislation was consolidated, and it is the Legal Aid Act 1974 which the present Bill replaces. Since then, the Legal Aid Act 1979 has established the extension of advice and assistance to cover representation—the system known as ABWOR—and the Legal Aid Act 1982 has made some important changes in the criminal legal aid system, including the establishment of statutory magistrates court duty solicitor schemes, which were joined in 1986 by the 24-hour scheme to give assistance to those held in police stations.

The Bill is intended to replace and consolidate all the existing legal aid legislation. In many ways, it also improves on the drafting and presentation of the existing legislation. There is, however, much more to the Bill than that. The aim of the Bill is to provide the litigant who might not otherwise be able to afford it because of his means—and the taxpayer—with a system that is efficient and effective and gives not only the best possible service but the best possible value for money. It must also be a system which is able to evolve to meet changing needs and new methods of giving advice as they develop.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Has the hon. and learned Gentleman seen the results of the Law Society's survey which was published on Monday this week and which showed that, since 1983, 40 per cent. of the solicitors doing legal aid work either have decided to give up the work because of the remuneration, or are considering giving it up? What effect will the Bill have on those solicitors who are left administering the legal aid system?

The Solicitor-General: I read the survey with some care and we shall continue to study it. Nearly two thirds of solicitors did not even bother to reply to the questionnaire. The number of solicitors carrying out legal aid services has increased pretty steadily over the past five years, from about 9,700 to 11,500. That is not to dismiss the points made in the questionnaire. They deserve careful study.

The principal new feature of the Bill is the establishment of the legal aid board. The Government believe that the legal aid scheme has outgrown the structure which was appropriate for it in the early 1950s and which has remained the same ever since. What we now consider is needed is one central body, including among its membership a whole range of expertise—not only barristers and solicitors but experts in management, finance, personnel, administration and the broader forms of advice giving. The aim is to provide a central body which can co-ordinate and manage all aspects of the legal aid scheme with a proper sense of order and strategic direction.

This decision to establish the board is not in any way a criticism of the existing administration. In particular, I wish to place on record in this House the Government's appreciation of the role played over the past 37 years by the Law Society. The close involvement of the legal profession has been one of the strengths of the legal aid scheme in the past, and it is the Government's wish that it should continue to be so in the future. The decision to establish the board is rather a reflection of the different needs of the future. If legal aid is to develop properly in response to the challenges of the 1990s and beyond, it must have the right legislative and administrative framework.

The key to this will be the board, assuming a central role in all aspects of the adminstration of legal aid. Before that can happen, there is a great deal of work to be done, and the sooner it can begin the better. Last December the Lord Chancellor announced that he intended to set up what is known as a shadow board to begin preparatory work as soon as possible. Today he will announce to Parliament the name of the new chairman of the board and of its initial membership. The objective is that the shadow board will begin work straightaway, preparing itself to take over from the Law Society, and planning for the future. It is the Lord Chancellor's hope that the board will be able to take over from the Law Society early in 1989.

The Government are determined that the changeover to the board should be conducted with the minimum disruption. The board will, therefore, initially do no more than take over those functions currently performed by the Law Society's legal aid administration. However, the Governmant's longer term aim is that the board should have overall responsibility for all aspects of legal aid, unless there are strong arguments to the contrary. It will, therefore, be invited to look also at aspects of the scheme not currently administered by the Law Society, such as means assessment for civil legal aid, consideration of applications for criminal legal aid and the determination of all legal aid bills.

There are problems involved and the Government are fully alert to them. For that reason, no decision has yet been taken to transfer any of those functions to the board. Responsibility for civil legal aid means assessment, criminal legal aid grant and any other functions will be given to the board only if it appears to the board and the Government that that is a sensible way of proceeding and that it is in the best interests of the legal aid scheme as a whole.

Some concern has been expressed that the legal aid board will not be independent of Government. I believe that the names that the Lord Chancellor is announcing today will go far to meet those concerns. However, the concept of independence must be put into context. The present legal aid administration is not simply free to do what it likes, and nor will be the new board. The Government will continue to set the broad framework of the legal aid arrangements and will retain their present role over such matters as financial eligibility limits. The Government have responsibility to the taxpayer and to Parliament to ensure that money is spent wisely and for the purposes for which it was voted. It is a responsibility that no Government can abdicate. But within the overall constraints set by Parliament the board will have considerable freedom to manage its affairs in the way that it considers best.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): It would considerably allay the fears that have been expressed by the professional associations and the public in relation to the independence of the board if the hon. and learned Gentleman would be prepared to give an unequivocal assurance that the legal aid advisory committee, which over the years has done such sterling work protecting the public interest, will be retained. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give that unequivocal assurance?

The Solicitor-General: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks about the legal aid advisory committee. The Bill provides and the proposal is that the legal aid advisory committee should remain in being for at least a year but that its position should then be reviewed. The hon. Gentleman has anticipated remarks that I proposed to make later in my speech. It will be reviewed with an entirely open mind by the Lord Chancellor.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Solicitor-General appears to be trying hard to help. Does he realise that many people are concerned about the position of women, who will continue to need legal aid for cases of domestic violence? There is considerable worry that this change, if any attempt is made to restrict applications for legal assistance, will make matters very difficult for people.

The Solicitor-General: I quite understand the hon. Lady's anxiety, but I hope that I shall be able to set her mind at rest. I have seen nothing in the new structure to give her cause for concern. I know from my own not all that distant experience in the courts that many women make use of legal aid for that purpose. I foresee no reason why they should not continue to do so.

A further sector that the board will be invited to consider at an early stage is the provision of advice and assistance. This has grown enormously over the past nine years. Since 1979, expenditure on advice and assistance —which is usually referred to as the green form scheme —has risen from £12 million to £60 million per year, and the number of people receiving help has likewise increased from 300,000 to 1·2 million. Such growth looks set to continue.

Both the range of problems for which help is provided has widened and the kind of agency providing such advice has developed greatly. Such bodies as law centres, welfare rights centres, and the invaluable nationwide network of citizens advice bureaux—bodies partly voluntary, partly funded, largely by local government and partly by central Government, have all developed in the field. Many provide high standards of expertise available to clients in accessible and attractive ways. The initial recommendations of the efficiency scrutiny which preceded the legal aid White Paper made radical suggestions which we have rejected, but we see real potential benefit to the consumer in the idea of making greater use of advice agencies in these sectors and it is one of the important areas that the new board will be invited to examine. This Bill provides the powers to enable that to be done.

In legislative terms, the provisions are relatively simple. Part II of the Bill provides that the board shall have the power to make arrangements for the provision of advice and assistance by means of contracts with, or grants or loans to, individuals, organisations or groups.

We contemplate that when the board invites tenders it will specify what is to be provided, by whom and on what terms. The standards which will have to be met will be an important part of the requirements. It will be open to solicitors themselves to submit tenders to do the work, as it will to advice agencies and others. It will be open to the board to make different arrangements in different parts of the country. It follows, of course, that once new arrangements have been made for handling particular categories of case, these will be excluded from the existing green form scheme. Otherwise there would be duplication.

I emphasise two points. First, the Government fully recognise the importance of the level of service to the client. Secondly, the Government have taken no firm decisions on the extent to which these powers should be used nor the areas of work in which they would be appropriate. The Government will await the board's advice. The board will, in any event, be able to exercise its powers by means of contracts only if the Lord Chancellor so directs and only in accordance with his directions.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): In assessing the impact of competitive tendering and where it should apply, will the hon. and learned Gentleman look at the impact of competitive tendering upon small towns and rural areas and at the services available to the population in sparsely populated areas? Much free legal advice and basic legal advice is given by small firms of solicitors which fear these provisions.

The Solicitor-General: I am sure that the board will look carefully at the hon. and learned Gentleman's point and keep it carefully in mind in weighing up whether or not to accept the contract, to proceed in that method or to continue with the existing method, or with a combination of the two.

In addition to the power to award contracts, the board is given the power to make grants. This is relevant to the position of law centres. The Government's view of law centres remains as it has been since 1979. Law centres may well provide a valuable service to their local communities, but they are essentially a local service, and as such it is more appropriate that they should receive local, rather than central, funding. There is an exception to this. The Lord Chancellor's Department provides funds to seven law centres. The Lord Chancellor now proposes to invite the new legal aid board to take over responsibility for the grants to the seven centres he currently funds. The Department will need to be satisfied that the services provided by those seven centres fit into the general pattern of its plans for advice and assistance. Provided, however, that it is so satisfied, and subject to the Lord Chancellor's agreement, it will be open to it to continue to pay the grants under the powers in part II of the Bill. It will, of course, also be open to those and other law centres to submit proposals for contracts or grants in the general context of the board's plans for advice and assistance.

I should now like to say a word about a class of case that has caused widespread public interest—the type of multi-party action which has recently involved some drugs companies, for example. During the Bill's passage through the other place the Lord Chancellor put forward important amendments which will allow the board to enter into contracts with firms of solicitors for the provision of representation in specified categories of civil proceedings. We envisage that the board would identify particular groups of cases, such as multi-party actions, raising common issues and in which there was no risk of conflict of interest, for which representation might advantageously be provided by particular solicitors. Assisted persons with cases falling within a prescribed category would then be directed to a solicitor under contract to the board, thus securing proper co-ordination of all such cases. That process would involve some restriction on the freedom of choice of solicitor by individuals involved in those cases, but we believe that that price must be paid for greater co-ordination of multi-party actions anyway.

There will obviously be a great deal of work for the legal aid board to do to flesh out the arrangements for the contracting system. For instance, special arrangements for eligibility and means-testing may need to be made for some or all of the litigants falling within the prescribed group. Modifications may be required to the merits test, and separate provision may be appropriate for the statutory charge to be taken from the total sum recovered by all the plaintiffs in a class action. Much detailed work remains to be done by the board on these and other matters. Nevertheless, I believe that the proposals, which have been widely welcomed, represent a useful way forward for multi-party actions, and perhaps also for other categories of civil legal aid work where the system may be appropriate and cost effective and where it would bring real benefit to the legally aided person.

I have concentrated so far on the provisions in the Bill relating to the legal aid board, to advice and assistance, and to the making of contracts for civil legal aid, because those are the crucial aspects in which the Bill departs from the existing legislation. It may help, however, if I now go briefly through the Bill and outline its main provisions.

Part I begins with a clear statement of the purpose of the Bill, and goes on to provide basic definitions of the terms used throughout the Bill.

Part II contains the provisions relating to the establishment of the board and the power to award contracts and make grants. In part II, the board is given its general power to do such as it considers necessary to provide or secure the provisions of services under the Bill.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister confirm that he has today issued a press release on the composition of the board? If so, has he placed it on the

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

Table for all hon. Members to see? As the matter is relevant to part II of the Bill, it should be widely available, rather than being given a narrow circulation.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor has today answered a parliamentary question —and I have answered a question in this House—giving the names of the new chairman and members of the board. I hope that the House will agree with my right hon. and noble Friend that it is for the convenience of the House to have the information available today rather than waiting until tomorrow when this debate will be over. I confess that I have not yet placed a copy on the Table, but I shall be happy to make amends as soon as I can.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Solicitor-General tell the House how many members of the board are lawyers and how many are former or present consumers of the legal aid system? In other words, how many of them have actually applied for legal aid in the past?

Mr. Boateng: While he is about it, will the Minister tell us how many of the board are black and how many are women?

The Solicitor-General: I shall do my best to oblige. I do not know whether any members of the board have been consumers of legal aid in the past. As to the professions, the board includes two barristers and two solicitors out of a total membership of 11. It also includes people with experience of personnel, a number with experience as justices of the peace and a founder member of the legal aid practitioners group, who should bring to the workings of the board some experience from pretty close to the ground. The board's members include people with management experience and a representative—she is also a member in her own right—of the council of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. The chairman has long management experience in ICI, and until fairly recently was the chief executive of a large public limited company.

Mr. Cryer: Would it not have been more convenient for the House had the Minister made the press release available in the Vote Office? The business of arranging a planted parliamentary question and answer is not for the convenience of the House as the question will not be published in *Hansard* until tomorrow. As the Minister pointed out, the debate will be over by then. At 7 o'clock or thereabouts we shall be reaching a conclusion on the matter. I urge the Minister not to trample on the rights of Parliament. He should make sure that information deliberately published by his Department in conjunction with a Bill is properly made available.

The Solicitor-General: I acknowledge what the hon. Gentleman says, but I think that I should make a little progress.

Mr. Vaz: On this last point——

The Solicitor-General: If I may, I shall make a little progress and then give way if the hon. Gentleman's question is still pertinent.

Part III sets out the provisions for advice and assistance provided by solicitors. This is intended as a restatement of the existing provisions regarding green form and advice by way of representation. The terms of the legislation differ from the 1974 Act in a number of respects, but the overall effect is the same.

The Government intend to retain in broadly its present form the current structure of regulations for assessing financial eligibility for all forms of legal aid, at least for the foreseeable future. Even when the board is established, the Lord Chancellor will, of course, as now, retain full control over eligibility levels, subject to the consent of Parliament. It would not be appropriate to delegate such an important factor in access to justice.

Part IV deals with civil legal aid. The proceedings for which that is, and is not, available are listed in schedule 2. This largely reproduces the current position.

Part V deals with criminal legal aid. Once again, the scope of criminal legal aid and the financial conditions will remain as they are now. Part V, however, contains powers that mirror those in part II to transfer functions currently performed by the courts to the new board. The Lord Chancellor will, of course, have to be fully satisfied that this is wise before he agrees to such a transfer, which will be made by regulations subject to the affirmative procedure.

Part VI makes special arrangements for legal aid in care proceedings and contempt proceedings. There has long been criticism that care proceedings were entangled with criminal proceedings in the 1974 Act and the Bill puts that right.

Part VII deals with a number of miscellaneous points, and sets out the regulation-making powers. The only one of those to which I would specifically draw the House's attention is that relating to the remuneration of the legal profession. The White Paper made it clear that the Government will continue to have regard to the principle of fair remuneration for work actually and reasonably done. It is, however, necessary for the Government also to have regard to the other claims on public funds. The Government must be fair to the taxpayer as well as to the practitioner. The aim is to produce a result that is fair overall; but fairness is inevitably a somewhat imprecise concept. Clauses 34(2) and 34(7) help to clarify the approach that will be adopted by setting out the factors, which include time and skill, earnings, overheads, and number and general level of barristers and solicitors available, to which the Lord Chancellor shall have regard when setting rates. The aim of that list, which is not exhaustive, is to ensure that all relevant factors are taken into account.

Part VII also deals with the future of the legal aid advisory committee. As the legal aid White Paper made clear, once the legal aid board has been established, the role and function of the committee will inevitably change. However, the Government believe that the committee will continue to have a useful role to play, at least during the period of transition to the legal aid board, and in the early days of the board's existence. The Bill, therefore, contains power to retain the advisory committee.

As circumstances may well alter once the board has settled into its new role, the Bill also includes a power to allow the committee to be disbanded by regulations if this should seem appropriate. The Lord Chancellor intends to review with an open mind the committee's continuing role 12 months after the board has taken over its responsibilities.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. and learned Gentleman has not answered the question about how many members of the new legal aid board are black and how many are women.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): How many are homosexual?

Mr. Vaz: Indeed, as the hon. Member for Coward Chance asks, how many are homosexual?

The Solicitor-General: I shall have to make inquiries as I am afraid that that information is not immediately apparent from the names of the members. I shall let the hon. Gentleman have an answer as soon as I reasonably can.

Finally, I should mention that, although the majority of the Bill relates only to England and Wales, schedule 4 contains certain amendments to Scottish legal aid legislation.

It is the Government's view that the Bill represents an important step forward in ensuring the future strength and vitality of the legal aid scheme. The legal aid board will have a challenging job to do, but the Government are confident that the end result will be a legal aid scheme that is healthier, more efficient and more effective in the service it provides, to the consumer and to the country.

4.11 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): My sympathies go out to the Lord Chancellor who had to introduce the Bill. It is not a legal aid Bill; it is a money Bill, and the dead hand of the Treasury is seen all over it. It is said that it will consolidate the £10 million savings contemplated in the legal aid White Paper. Its aim is to do much more than that. Its aim is to ensure a firm Treasury rein on growth, to curb any independence and to stifle any additional innovation or expansion that may embarrass the Treasury.

There is much in the Bill that we welcome, especially the setting up of a new legal aid board. Although in recent years there has been considerable criticism of some of the Law Society's machinery, especially in some areas of London—basically because of underfunding—it is right for me to join in thanking those who have administered the scheme over the years.

Will the new board be independent? Today the Solicitor-General said that the board will have considerable freedom to manage its affairs. The Lord Chancellor said:

"The stature of those who will be appointed . . . will ensure that they are independent."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 29 February 1988; Vol. 494, c. 26.]

My hon. Friends and I will study the list of the members to the new board, which we have just received. However, the Lord Chancellor also said:

"The Legal Aid Board is not going to be free to do what it likes, when it likes and how it likes"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 December 1987; Vol. 491, c. 608.]

That is a measure of the considerable independence to which the Solicitor-General referred.

The board has wide powers under clause 4, but the key powers to make contracts, grants or loans for the provision of legal services are subject to tight control by the Lord Chancellor. The powers are there, but in practice their operation is held under tight rein.

One of the key tests of the virility of the board will be its desire to carry out research. The record of the Lord Chancellor's Department is lamentable. I need only quote the unhappy predictions of the effect of the cuts in dependant allowances in 1986. If we are to start a new era, despite the Treasury clamp, and if the transfer of responsibilities is to mean anything more than a tidying up operation and an abdication to firm Treasury control, the board must be seen to be innovative in thought and ideas. It must be able to test its thoughts and decisions in practice and to evaluate properly the results of its actions.

We would be a great deal happier if the legal aid advisory committee were to be retained for at least five years until we see how the board proves itself. We would be a great deal happier if there was a firm commitment to retain and extend such bodies as the north-west legal services committee. That committee should extend its services to areas such as south Wales, which has demanded them. Other areas may also need such services. It is to the north and west of Watford that we can see fed in the needs and gaps in legal provision.

I was most interested to hear the Solicitor-General's remarks regarding the aims of the Bill. The curious feature of the Bill, as presented to the Lords, was that it was a Bill without a stated purpose for the legal aid scheme. It was only in the other place, after a hard fought struggle and more than one suggested amendment, that the new part I was included in the Bill. Part I states:

"The purpose of this Act is to establish a framework"—

that does not seem particularly encouraging—

"for the provision under Parts II, III, IV, V and VI of advice, assistance and representation which is publicly funded with a view to helping persons who might otherwise be unable to obtain advice, assistance or representation on account of their means."

I can only surmise that the draftsman was a classical scholar and that he used those words "with a view" to reminding himself of the Greek fable of Tantalus. That is what the words amount to. The words are not especially effective or conclusive. Today, the Solicitor-General used, without attribution, the opening sentence of the White Paper, which states:

"The purpose of Legal Aid is to ensure that people of small or moderate means receive access to proper legal advice and to justice."

Why on earth were those words not inserted in the Bill? Perhaps here again the Treasury wanted no hostages to fortune.

We should also consider the original draft of the Bill as regards the remuneration of the profession. In the original draft it was said that the Lord Chancellor, in determining the remuneration of the profession,

"shall be entitled to have regard to a number of factors".

In other words, he may have regard to such factors; equally he can ignore them. The catalogue of matters set out in the original Bill have no greater significance than Webbs catalogue of seeds.

The Bill is now much improved. It is now mandatory that the Lord Chancellor shall have regard to a number of factors—I shall not weary the House by detailing them. We shall return to those factors and examine them in much greater detail in Committee.

It has been suggested that one of the purposes of the draftsman, working on his Treasury brief, was to remove the danger of the Lord Chancellor, in common with his predecessor, being taken to court on an application for judicial review. That suggestion has been hotly denied by the Lord Chancellor. We accept, of course, that that was not the Lord Chancellor's intention. My regard for parliamentary draftsmen is such that that must have been

[Mr. John Morris]

a conclusion that they could not miss, given the way that they drafted the original Bill. Be that as it may, a conversion, even on a deathbed, is always welcome.

Of equal if not of greater importance is the failure to retain the principle of

"fair remuneration for work actually and reasonably done".

Why should that hallowed phrase be consigned to the dustbin?

Our judicial system requires the legal profession to be independent, competent and industrious and to have the highest standards of integrity. This is not a plea for more money for lawyers. I suspect that if such a plea were made in this House it would fall on deaf ears. A legal aid service poorly paid will inevitably become a poor service. The result will be two classes of justice: one for those who can afford to pay, and a substantially inadequate one for those who cannot.

Our basic objection to the Bill is that the Government, when setting up new machinery for the administration of legal aid, have failed to will the means. Further, they have sought to limit the opportunity for testing the amount of the means to be provided. Legal aid will become more and more a second-class service.

Under-remuneration over the years has severely pruned the rewards to legal aid practitioners. The Goverrmment talk of value for money. It is about time that money for value was willed.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman read the speech of Lord Denning in the other place? If he has, how does he reconcile his somewhat Doomsday approach to the Bill with the warm welcome that Lord Denning gave to it, when he said that the present legal aid system needed restructuring, which is what the Bill does? There can be few greater champions of the law litigant in history than Lord Denning.

Mr. Morris: I have the highest respect for Lord Denning. He has unique views on many subjects. Perhaps it would have been better if the hon. Member had completed his studies and read also the views of Lord Ackner, Lord Griffiths and every other Member of the House of Lords who deprecated the position that the legal aid service had reached. If the hon. Member reflects on the debates in the Lords—I have read each of them—he will find, not for the first time, that Lord Denning is fairly unique in his views.

It was unfortunate that the former Lord Chancellor but one, Lord Hailsham—they seem to move at an increasing pace in their number and tenure of office—had to be taken to court by the profession. He was the unfortunate puppet who had to dance to the tune of the Treasury. Despite what amounted to victory and the increases in remuneration since, I have no doubt that recruitment to the profession has suffered. We have lost many of the best lawyers who would have headed the profession. They have gone instead to the City and to industry.

Perhaps it is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of Lord Denning, but almost on the eve of this debate the Law Society produced evidence on that sector of the profession doing legal aid work. It states, first, that about 40 per cent. of solicitors' offices doing criminal legal aid work are either dropping out of it or considering dropping it altogether. Secondly, in January and February 41 solicitors' offices gave up criminal legal aid work. If the rate continues, as many as 700 solicitors' offices might have dropped the work by the end of the year. The Law Society further states that it needs a 38 per cent. rise in fees for criminal legal aid work to restore it to the level of remuneration of 1981. This year the increase in London has been 7·4 per cent. When the Solicitor-General replies, will he say how far the Government contest those figures?

The third point made by the Law Society is that 27 per cent. of offices have given up or are seriously thinking of giving up matrimonial legal aid work. Matrimonial legal aid is of the utmost importance to the weakest in the community, who are frequently women. Women will need help more than anyone from legal aid, although thousands of males may be involved, too.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: It is a very short debate, but I am always willing to give way.

Mr. Hind: The right hon. and learned Gentleman says that many solicitors have given up legal aid work. Does he agree that in relation to crime that is understandable as many members of the profession tend to look down on criminal work? As a member of the Criminal Bar Association, I believe that they do so quite wrongly. This is an important matter to those who represent all interests. What view would the right hon. and learned Gentleman take of funding the legal aid scheme if he were in the position of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General?

Mr. Morris: I am not the steward for the legal aid scheme. The stewardship of the Government is being challenged. I will give the figures later of what has happened since 1979. I put them before the House to find out whether the Solicitor-General accepts them. If he cannot tell us today, I hope that he will do so in Committee. I am worried that more and more people are leaving the profession. The view of the profession is that they are leaving because of poor remuneration.

Whether or not the predictions are right—there is an element of Doomsday involved—it is for the Government to disprove it. For the Government to suggest that all is well is not good enough. Although I cannot vouch for those predictions, there has been so much cumulative aggravation over the years that the profession is becoming conditioned to stopping or cutting down on legal aid work.

I suppose that the production line of newly trained lawyers will keep the system going for some time yet. However, it will be kept going by the young and the inexperienced—until they, too, find something better to do. I repeat that it will become more and more a second-class system. Salary earners, such as the Treasury mandarins, have a blind spot when it comes to considering fee earners.

Several distinguished industrialists have been appointed to the legal aid board, and I would have more confidence in them fixing remuneration than the Lord Chancellor's Department, acting, as it has, as the Treasury's ventriloquist. There should be an independent body to recommend the awards.

Our other anxiety is the steady drip of cutting eligibility for legal aid. The Law Society believes that the number of those eligible for legal aid is declining. Since 1979 a quarter

of the population have lost their right to legal aid. Is that accepted or challenged by the Government? Is it the Government's policy to whittle down legal aid year by year, or do they intend to arrest the decline and, if so, how? That goes to the very heart of my observations. A clear statement on this would be helpful before we started our Committee discussions.

The information provided by the Law Society is a serious challenge to the Government's stewardship of the legal aid system. It is because of that stewardship that we are profoundly dissatisfied with the Bill. Legal aid needs to be expanded and not restricted. We shall return to the concern of the Law Society about the proposal to remove wills and conveyancing from the scope of the legal aid green form, but many cases of hardship will be caused.

There is a need for legal aid to cover representation in coroners' courts, applications to the European Court—such applications are frequently made against the Government and are, more often than not, successful—statutory tribunals and industrial, immigration and social security tribunals. In many instances, there is a tremendous imbalance in a tribunal, with one party being represented by experienced and expensive advisers fighting against an unrepresented individual. Proceedings at such tribunals may involve complex questions of the law and consideration of both oral and documentary evidence. It is not true to say that tribunal procedure and practice is straightforward or that it permits the layman to represent himself.

Trade unions perform an invaluable task. In my younger days at the Bar in south Wales, one of the most eminent of the National Union of Mineworkers' experts was known as Dai Common Law because of his expertise. He performed a wonderful task. However, when our constituents come to our surgeries on matters such as mobility and constant care allowances and a whole host of other allowances which involve the claims of hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds over the years, when no legal aid is available, we can only look at their papers and know that they will be going alone and unrepresented the following day before a tribunal.

When I see that legal aid is available for comparatively small claims in our county courts, yet thousands of pounds over the years are involved in those tribunals, I regard it as manifestly unjust that our constituents are not represented in litigation of the utmost importance to them. It has also been argued, although it is not of the highest priority, that defamation cases should be covered.

The Bill has important proposals for contracting out to which the Solicitor-General referred. Before we go down that road, we must be satisfied that it does not lead to a worse service and does not restrict the freedom of choice. If a monopoly is created in any area, be it in subject matter or regarding geography, that will be a retrograde step. It was my impression from the Solicitor-General's remarks that, if there was contracting-out in that area, the green form would be excluded. That would be a diminution of the right to freedom of choice.

We need a great deal of clarification. What is the Government's thinking on the matter? I presume that it does not include representation as well as advice. Have the Government satisfied themselves that there is no danger of inadequate advice leading to greater cost when litigation may follow? When contracting-out is determined for a particular area, what happens when the subject is raised ancillary to other matters when there is green form advice? Will the cheapest tenderer win the contract? What additional funding is envisaged for the agencies that will do the work? How will they ensure a proper geographical spread for contracting-out?

The citizens advice bureau in my area, which does invaluable work, is already having to close a valuable part of its service. Law centres are under constant threat. What is the Government's policy on the funding of law centres, and what will be the statutory basis for the funding of those centres still funded by the Lord Chancellor? Is there to be no change, or are we to see any advance?

Great concern has been expressed about some aspects of the Bill's proposals for civil legal aid contributions and we shall return to that matter in Committee. The power to spread the cost of legal aid contributions throughout a case is of particular concern. The bottom line of the amount of contributions will depend not on the depth of the pocket, but on the length of the case, and opposing parties will have an interest to delay so as to increase financial pressure on the legal aid litigant. In any event, the litigant will not be able to know at the outset what his commitments will be. He will be at the mercy of procedural delays and of his well-funded opponent.

There is much dissatisfaction with many aspects of civil legal aid and the Bill, without curing some problems, may aggravate others. Against that background, we believe that this is both a Bill of missed opportunities and a means of tying the Lord Chancellor hand and foot to the Treasury. In the last century, the jurisdiction of equity was criticised as being dependent on the length of the Lord Chancellor's foot. In the latter part of this century, access to justice for people of small or moderate means will depend upon how the Lord Chancellor's feet are made to dance to the tune of the Treasury. The Bill is the poisoned chalice that he has inherited, his damnosa hereditas, his cursed inheritance. It will cut expenditure in legal aid. It is an enabling Bill with still far too many regulation-making powers subject only to negative resolution.

The Bill has been much improved in the other place in that respect, but, in the absence of an indication of the Government's thinking on so many parts of the Bill, that aspect could have been corrected if the Government had furnished us with draft regulations when the Bill was presented or even at this late stage. At least we would have been able to debate the appropriate clauses, not in a vacuum but with a clear understanding of the Government's thinking. It is not too late for the Law Officers to go back to the Lord Chancellor and ask whether we can have such clarification for the Commons, which, after all, wills the means, so that we can examine how those means are to be spent and ensure that draft regulations are presented to us so that we can properly discuss the Bill.

The future operation of the legal aid board is unknown. We know that the future shape and content will be even more subject to the clammy hands of the Treasury. Although it is an enabling Bill, we do not know what the Government really want to do, except to cut costs. We wish the Lord Chancellor well. His task has been made more difficult by the Bill. He will want to use his discretionary powers in the best way possible, but he may not be allowed to do so. We oppose the Bill because of its uncertainty and the shackling effect of the Treasury and because, having been given valuable legislative time, it is a Bill of lost opportunities.

4.40 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I declare an interest, because when I can find a spare moment I am a practising lawyer at the criminal Bar, which means that I could well be affected by the provisions of the Bill. I am also the chairman of the joint all-party parliamentary barristers' group.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) has said that this is a money Bill that has the dead hand of the Treasury all over it. The dead hand of the Treasury needs to be all over it. The philosophy of financial freedom in Government affairs died with the previous Labour Government. The secret of the success of the present Government, apart from sound leadership, has been financial control. There is nothing wrong with the principle of financial control provided that the operation of the legal aid scheme is independent of the Government.

There is no doubt that the tender plant of free legal advice and assistance for those who could not otherwise obtain such advice has grown over 40 years into a large and unruly tree. The tree has now to be trimmed, as any plant needs to be trimmed. It has to be attended to and made more productive. The Bill is therefore timely and the Government's main proposals are sensible and necessary.

It is alarming that there should be so much opposition to the Bill from those who are most intimately concerned with the issues that it raises—for example, the Bar, the Law Society and assistance agencies such as the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Have the Government got it all wrong or have they got it more or less right, the experts having misunderstood it and got it all wrong? The Government cannot be accused of malice towards the legal profession, still less to those who need legal services. The Government are advised by those who have day-to-day knowledge of the working of the system and its needs, people whose very purpose is to analyse the working and to improve the operation of the legal system.

It is possible for men and women of good will to start by fearing the worst and then to find elements that confirm their fears and thereby to come to wrong conclusions. We know how that human process works from our experience in this place.

Two things emerge thus far from the Bill. First, it contains a number of provisions that understandably alarm those who are looking to be alarmed. Everything is to become more centrally controlled with future action left largely to regulations. From Ministers' speeches it is clear that the Government are worried about the lack of proper financial control of spending on legal aid. This issue was brought out clearly in the 1986 interdepartmental scrutiny of the efficiency of legal aid. Such worry usually presages cuts—that is the experience of parliamentarians—and that would be at a time of greatly expanded activity due to the avalanche of legislation that the Government have perpetrated.

Who will suffer if there are cuts? The very poorest may not suffer, but what about those who are not desperately poor? What about the legal profession? The circumstances are certainly there for lawyers to fear the worst.

That leads me to the second conclusion that the passage of the Bill draws from me. The legal profession and those who are concerned with legal advice require reassurance on the likely effect of the Bill on their work and upon the sort of service that it will do so much to provide for those who will need to use it. There is a need also for reassurance about the independence of the scheme from the Government. My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has given some reassurance this afternoon, but I think that more needs to be given. It is not unreasonable to expect that further reassurance to be forthcoming.

I shall draw attention to issues that I know are concerning the Bar, some of which have been alluded to already by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon, who is a vice-chairman of the joint all-party parliamentary barristers' group and who has a close understanding of the legal professions.

First, at a time when welfare state activity is proliferating and people's rights are increasing and expanding, it is no longer good enough for tribunals dealing with social security and employment, for example, to be outside the legal aid scheme, so that poor or poorer people do not get the advice or support that they need to guarantee their civil rights. If we are to overcome this shortcoming, of course, there will be a need for more expenditure. But there is no point in giving individuals rights that cannot be protected or ensured.

Secondly, if there are to be enough lawyers to do the job that is required, the work must be attractively enough paid to make their work worth while. It may be that there have never been so many lawyers and that lawyers have never been so well paid, but if the removal of the principle of "fair remuneration for work actually and reasonably done" means that the result will be a reduction in the payments that are made, we shall soon see fewer lawyers and a worsening service. There are doubts partly because the White Paper made no recommendation to remove the phrase "fair remuneration for work actually and reasonably done," nor was ther any consultation between the Government and the Law Society or the Bar Council. It is easy to understand why the worst is feared.

If my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General says that there is no intention to reduce the service or the pay, we will be driven to ask why it is necessary to remove something which has always been perceived as a safeguard against any Administration's change of mind. No one doubts for a moment the bona fides of the distinguished and eminent individuals who represent the legal profession as members of the Government, but what if the spokesmen change? It is precisely to remove that sort of fear that I say that it is unnecessary to interfere with the existing provisions and to tamper with words that provide reassurance.

Thirdly, why is it necessary to change the method of introducing changes in civil legal aid by secondary legislation from the existing method of affirmative resolution to one of negative resolution, which weakens parliamentary control over such changes? What is the point of that? How can the professions be reassured? How can the advice industry be reassured if such adverse changes are made without any obvious purpose?

Fourthly, why is it necessary to give the Lord Chancellor the power under clause 20(9) to remove the control of the courts to grant legal aid in criminal matters? The court has the evidence before it and sees the applicant. It has dealt traditionally and speedily with applications for criminal legal aid in a way that has caused the minimum of delay before trial. Is not the court the best judge of whether legal aid is necessary and the extent of it?

Fifthly, should not a defendant have the right of appeal if he is refused legal aid? Sometimes a decision is manifestly unjust and cries out for a reverse decision. It appears that such an appeal is no longer to be allowed.

I have highlighted five matters—perhaps there are others—that cause concern and upon which reassurance is necessary. However, I thank the Government for the assistance that they have given so far as the Bill proceeds through Parliament. First, it has offered the opportunity for two barristers to serve on the legal aid board, which is what the Bar Council requested. Secondly, there is the inclusion of the five Widgery criteria in clause 22(2) by which tests representation should be granted in criminal trials. Thirdly, there is the promise to enable groups of litigants to obtain legal aid to bring class actions, which will help alleged victims of drugs such as Opren to obtain justice. Fourthly, the legal aid advisory committee will remain in place for at least a year, and then it may well continue if it is seen to be useful after a full review has been completed. I might also add my thanks for the general good nature and helpful attitude adopted by my right hon. and hon. Friends when approached by intended groups about various worries.

The publication of the Bill was greeted with shrieks of horror in many quarters. With the Bill's passage through another place, there has been some reassurance and the shrieks have largely become little more than loud grumbles. Concessions have been made and hopefully more will be made. The use of the citizens advice bureaux as a filter for legal action provided by those who best know about the way in which the benefit system works has grown on everyone provided that there will be adequate resources for those organisations to do their job properly. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General will give that assurance clearly today as he was not able to give it in his opening remarks.

At the end of the day, the Government have established their bona fides in the matter. My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has reminded us that legal aid represents one of the fastest growing areas of Government expenditure. The number of people helped has risen from 150,000 some 25 years ago to more than 2 million today, with a fourfold increase in spending since 1979. That greatly exceeds the rise in the cost of living.

But the Government still have work to do on the Bill. They must still continue to reassure its critics. They can do that by helping with further amendments in answer to the anxieties that will be expressed. It is important that the Government do that so that lawyers will want to join the scheme. The service will remain of a high standard only if that happens and only then will my hon. and learned Friend's statement of the aims of the legal aid scheme—to ensure that people with small or moderate means obtain access to legal advice and justice—continue to be fulfilled.

4.51 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): When the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) began to speak, I thought that he was making a bid for succession to the portfolio of his hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. However, as he warmed to his theme, I fear that he fouled his prospects. Perhaps he did not really relish the thought of introducing Bills such as this.

There are many aspects of the Bill that should have been debated if the Government's business managers had afforded adequate time for this debate. One particular aspect was mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who expressed concern about the future funding of law centres. I would have liked to pursue that, if only because the first proposal for law centres in this country came from the Society of Labour Lawyers of which I have the honour to be chairman. I remember attending the conference 20 years ago which resulted in the production of the pamphlet entitled "Justice for All". That is how it all began.

I would also have liked to tempt my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon to embark on a discussion of Labour's Charter for Legal Rights which also originated from the Society of Labour Lawyers and the Law Centres Federation. But I refrain from embarking on that course, because other hon. Members want to take part in the debate. If I may borrow a forensic expression, I am content to adopt the arguments of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon. Who knows, at a later stage in the proceedings on the Bill, I might have an opportunity to add something of my own.

I want to confine my contribution to the matter which has occasioned the greatest anxiety and which has already been a subject in every contribution to the debate. I want to consider the Bill's effect on levels of remuneration in legal aid cases. Anxiety on that issue has been expressed very cogently already by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Indeed, it was expressed very cogently in another place by many noble Lords and in particular by Lord Ackner, Lord Griffiths and Lord Templeman. They were concerned that the principle of fair remuneration is not expressed in the Bill. It is not simply absent from the Bill, it has not simply been ignored, it has been dispatched. As the Solicitor-General reminded us, the existing legislation is the Legal Aid Act 1974. Section 39(3) of the 1974 Act—which is still the relevant legislation —contains those words.

Until now the Government have not expressed any doubt about the principle of fair remuneration. Command 9077 issued in 1983, which was the Government's first considered reaction to the Benson report after four years of reflection, stated:

> "The Government accepts that legally aided work should be reasonably remunerated."

There was no suggestion that the existing statutory formula was in question. Now those words are not in the Bill.

As the Solicitor-General reminded us, clause 34(7) of this Bill lists the matters to which the Lord Chancellor originally "may" and, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon reminded us, now "must" have regard in making provision for remuneration. Of course those are all relevant considerations. The Lord Chancellor said in another place, and the Solicitor-General repeated here today, that the word "fair" is vague. I am not sure whether I accept that, but I will let it pass for the moment. The courts deal with words like "fair" every day of the week, but the Solicitor-General said that the list is more specific. What I do not understand is why it is not possible to write in the principle of fairness as an objective, yet still retain that list as relevant considerations in achieving that objective.

That would have a number of advantages. In the admittedly unlikely event of the courts being troubled again about the levels of remuneration, there would be a statutory standard to which they could have regard,

[Mr. Peter Archer]

whether that was intended or not. It would also remove public anxiety, which is not really surprising in an atmosphere in which the Government have cut the funding of all public services. And, as my right hon. and learned Friend explained, it would provide the Lord Chancellor with a provision to which he could have reference in arguing with the Treasury. He can now point out that he must have regard to the considerations in the list. But the Treasury may reply that he must also have regard to the availability of resources. If the obligation was to provide for fair remuneration, the availability of resources would be a relevant consideration when considering for what purposes to make provision for legal aid, but not relevant when deciding a fair rate of remuneration for specific work. That is as it should be.

If a private company arranges for the supply of some commodity, it will consider the availability of resources when it decides how much to word order. But when the invoice is delivered, it cannot be heard to say that it will pay less than the appropriate price because it does not have adequate resources.

I want to explain why some of us feel so passionately about this. The Legal Aid and Advice Act 1949 was a great step towards the realisation of the principle of equality before the law. That is a fundamental constitutional principle. It has never been questioned as a major objective even though it has not always been attained in practice. It is the nearest that we have approached in this country to a general recognition of the social contract. It is the basis for saying that the law is equally available to us all and we are all therefore under an obligation to respect it.

So it is important that we should be clear what the principle means. The principle does not mean that we all have the same right. Judges, policemen, and tax collectors have rights that are not shared by the rest of us. The principle does not mean that all our rights have the same content. Someone who owns 30,000 acres has rights the content of which are so different from the content of your rights, Madam Deputy Speaker, or mine, that we cannot begin to call them the same rights.

People's respective rights are a matter for political debate. Whether it is fair that some people's rights should be limited to living on £26·05 a week while the managing director of the Burton group has an unfettered right to live on 60 per cent. of £1·3 million a year is a political question. It has nothing to do with legal theory. It shocks the sense of fairness of any decent person, but it does not infringe the principle of equality before the law—*[Interruption.]* There seems to be some agreement across the Chamber on that and we are obviously making progress.

The principle means that the legal system accords us all equally an opportunity to enforce such rights as we have. Just as the rich family can defend the integrity of its mansion, so the poor family can expect the law to uphold its right to occupy its council house or its bedsit. If we are not all equally afforded the protection of the law in that sense, every new right for which the House legislates will merely widen the inequalities.

One major source of inequality is that some people cannot afford to engage the services of lawyers when they need them. There are other causes. Some people, because of inequalities of education, find it more difficult than others to understand complicated official documents. Some, because of social inequalities, can telephone their solicitor at home or invite their accountant to dinner, or can consult a legal friend on the golf course. Others think of seeking legal advice in the same way that many of us regard a visit to the dentist. Some, because of economic inequalities, can drive to their solicitor's office in a few minutes, while others have to travel by public transport, perhaps changing buses three times in the process.

There will be other opportunities to address those questions. Today, we are concerned with eliminating inequalities that derive from an inability to pay. When the Legal Aid and Advice Act 1949 was introduced, the principle was that in matters covered by its provisions someone who needed legal aid should have available to him the same standard of services as someone who could afford to pay privately. So far as I know, that principle has never been expressly challenged.

One consequence was that the lawyer who acted or appeared for a legal aid client would receive the same remuneration as a lawyer who was privately instructed. True, as Lord Hailsham pointed out in another place, some of us are old enough to remember when the Bar suffered a reduction in its fees of 10 per cent. That was the Bar's agreed contribution to the funding of legal aid, perhaps in order to make it possible in the first instance. But the baseline of remuneration was the same, whether or not the lawyer's client received legal aid. And that arrangement was later considered unfair and was abolished.

But over the past few years, two levels of remuneration have been developing, according to whether or not the client receives legal aid—which has meant that lawyers with enough private work to keep them occupied have not wanted to take legally aided cases. That is confirmed by the results of the Law Society survey published on Monday, to which reference was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz).

There are beginning to be two kinds of lawyers—those available for legal aid work and those whose expertise and experience make it possible for them to confine their services to privately funded clients. In another place, the Lord Chancellor referred to idealism in the legal profession. I am sure he did not mean to imply that if someone is motivated by a social conscience it is right to take advantage of him, in the knowledge that such a person would not withdraw his services—that was the argument applied by the Government in respect of nurses.

It is true that many legal practitioners have been prepared to accept legal aid work if they could afford to do so, by way of taking the rough with the smooth. There are some who want the majority of their work to be from aided clients, because then they feel that they are meeting a social need. However, the number of solicitors' firms working on that basis which find that they cannot meet their overheads has been increasing. Some have ceased to practise while others are having to cut corners to survive. The principle that legal aid clients should receive the same standard of advice and representation as those who can afford to pay privately is no longer realised. In many areas, people find that they cannot obtain any legal advice or representation at all. All that has taken place while the words "fair remuneration" are in the Legal Aid Act.

I accept that the Lord Chancellor would like to remedy the situation—I do not dispute that for a moment. But it will not encourage the profession to hope for better things

now that those words have been removed, and it will not facilitate the Lord Chancellor's task in his discussions with the Treasury.

Other issues in the Bill also cry out for debate. I have never found it easy to understand why someone who suffers physical injury as the consequence of another's wrong doing should be entitled to legal aid in pursuing a remedy, whereas someone whose reputation is destroyed by a libel should be denied redress, unless he happens to be rich. I have never understood either why someone whose remedy lies in a tribunal hearing should be in a different position from someone whose redress lies in the courts. I endorse what was said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon.

I am not clear why eligibility for legal aid should be defined by a single, rigid cut-off point, while there are many who could afford to fund a county court action or a day in the High Court—but who would be ruined if they found themselves involved in a series of appeals. In the *Law Society's Gazette* for 9 March, Mr. Cyril Glasser asked how the Government can be satisfied with a situation where between 1979 and 1986 something like one quarter of households in England and Wales ceased to be eligible for legal aid.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I agree with what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said, but perhaps he should also address the question that exercises me. Why did the Labour Government, of which he was a member, not make the necessary changes to allow people to be represented at tribunals? Is it not also correct to say that the number of people eligible for legal aid fell dramatically during the period of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Archer: No. I do not know where the hon. and learned Gentleman obtained that information, but it is totally false. I say that from my own experience, because I was the Minister who introduced the 1979 Bill into the House. It was that legislation which restored levels of legal aid to those which existed initially.

Mr. Carlile: What about between 1976 and 1979?

Mr. Archer: It is true that a number of steps had to be taken to adjust for that situation. There was, for example, a change in the way in which undefended divorces were dealt with, as I am sure the hon. and learned Gentleman will remember. I am happy to defend the record of the Labour Government. We would like to have done a number of other things. Perhaps I should not divulge to the hon. and learned Gentleman the contents of my private diaries—I shall publish those later!—but they record a number of discussions aimed at redressing certain problems. However, I have one eye on the clock and I know that other right hon. and hon. Members wish to contribute. If the hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me, I am content to deal with those other arguments in Committee.

They are all matters which should be raised, and which we ought to have debated today had we had more time. However, I can promise the Solicitor-General a lively time when we come to the Committee stage.

5.7 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I am grateful for this chance to contribute briefly to the debate. I begin by declaring an interest as a solicitor in private practice. None of us doubts that the pressures on the legal aid system have increased dramatically in recent years. The amount spent on the system has also dramatically increased, though little of that is reflected in the fees paid to lawyers. That increase is a reflection of the larger number of people eligible for legal aid, the increased volume of crime, the higher number of divorces, and so on. The cost of providing legal aid has risen alarmingly and the Government are right to concern themselves with that development. The machinery is badly overburdened and without doubt restructuring is needed. Therefore, I broadly welcome the Bill.

I look at the question of legal aid, first, from the applicant's point of view. The position varies depending on whether the applicant applies to a magistrates court in connection with a crime with which he has been charged, or makes an application in respect of an action in a civil court or for divorce. As to the first, the present system appears to work very well, with magistrates' clerks able to grant or refuse applications for legal aid within a few days, or even quicker. At Dorking court, at which I have practised, the clerk, Mr. Kimnell, and his deputy, Mr. Hall, deal with applications within a matter of hours, and never take more than a day. That is good news for the applicant, who is given a decision quickly.

One may contrast that situation with applications for legal aid in a civil action or in respect of divorce. The legal aid office at Brighton, which works very hard and is greatly overburdened, currently takes upwards of three months to determine an application for legal aid. That is bad news for the whole system and is very bad news for the applicant, whose position may often be prejudiced as a result of such unreasonable delays. I do not criticise the staff. Far from it. They work terribly hard. The system, however, is in need of a major overhaul. That is the position of the applicant.

But, at the end of the day, the solicitor needs to get his costs taxed. Here again, the system, in both criminal and civil law, is out of date and in need of reform. The forms which must be filled up for criminal costs to be taxed are becoming more difficult to understand. The duty solicitor forms are almost impossible. In civil law, the bill of costs is prepared by a costs draftsman. The laborious process of taxation takes time and is old-fashioned, involving the allocator, for instance. It is a difficult system and it costs money itself, because there is no remuneration for all the work involved in sorting out the costs.

Three problems that I see in the Bill have been dealt with in earlier speeches. First, I am a little concerned about the possible cutback on the green form scheme. The green form has been a great blessing for many people who have been in need of legal advice in the past few years. A good deal of money has been spent on it, but perhaps we should blame ourselves. We pass so much legislation that the poor chap in the street has a bewildering sense of rights and remedies, and he needs to be looked after.

Let me give an example. A poor man on social security found himself tempted to send for a book advertised in a magazine. It was one of those offers involving "no obligation", and he sent off a couple of pounds. He then found that the company had him by the throat, so to speak: book after book and bill after bill turned up.

That man could go to a solicitor and take advice under the green form scheme. He did so, and the solicitor was able to put him on the same level as the rich company, writing a hard solicitor's letter and getting the company off

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his back. If that remedy is taken from the poor man—for a solicitor's letter does help—he will be put at a disadvantage compared with the big battalions, and I do not believe that any of us wants that to happen.

The second point that concerns me slightly is the proposal to put out parts of the law to competitive tendering. Will that mean a continuing high quality of service, or will the standard drop? I rather fear it will be the latter.

There is also the question of fair remuneration. Lawyers are often the subject of much ridicule for earning vast fees, but most of us in practice know that legal aid itself does not pay very well, and the rates have not risen substantially in past years. Without a system of fair and proper remuneration, there is a danger that solicitors will stop doing legal aid work. If they do not stop outright, they may not see the client; they will arrange for secretaries and junior clerks to do so. I have already seen that operating in firms in Surrey. The junior people see the clients, who do not receive the necessary advice because the solicitors' practices cannot afford to arrange for a partner or qualified person to deal with them.

I ask my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to take on board the question of remuneration. I congratulate him on the way in which he has put over the points in the Bill. I know that he will consider what I have said, but I feel that the profession has a right to be slightly concerned.

We could all offer advice on how the legal aid system could save money. Undoubtedly much money is wasted. There is a tendency for some solicitors—and, dare I say, some members of the Bar—to encourage those on criminal charges always to go for trial. That, of course, is not a good thing. Some solicitors, frightened to take a case in the magistrates court, say, "Go for trial. We will sort out the plea later." That means double pay. My hon. and learned Friend says, quite rightly, that barristers would never do such a thing, but solicitors sometimes do, which is a pity. I do not know whether we should consider limiting the right to jury trial, but I feel that we must concern ourselves with the amount spent on duplication by the profession.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I feel that the Government should be extremely careful before taking the course suggested by my hon. Friend. In the days when I used to practise at the Bar, I fear that it was true that anyone who was convicted of shoplifting and appeared before a stipendiary magistrate stood absolutely no chance of acquittal. It was like a sausage machine. One after the other, the same excuses were trotted out, and one after another they went down. We must be very careful about taking the right of jury trial away from such defendants.

Mr. Malins: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to mention the importance of jury trial, particularly for those charged with offences of dishonesty. I recognise that right, but I express my concern about the costs.

We must also reform the system in the civil courts. Civil legal aid bills get bigger and bigger. For instance, in the present state of divorce law, practitioners end up with files 12 in thick before they ever get into court. If the parties in a divorce action could be brought to court more quickly or brought before the registrar for a conciliation appointment, the correspondence could be shortened and the enormous costs cut down.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend has not referred to public inquiries. Such a case may involve a local authority or water authority with immense resources, QCs galore and considerable administrative back-up. The issue may be one of major regional or national importance. Yet the people on the other side—the objectors—are more or less on their own, as they cannot afford to do much, although there is a legitimate public interest.

Has my hon. Friend any sympathy with the idea of a certificate of public interest being issued by a Minister or a judge in chambers to enable legal aid to be granted to an amenity group? We could then be satisfied, in cases such as the Sizewell inquiry, that a proper and fair hearing had been provided by the opportunity given to the objectors to be represented with the help of legal aid.

Mr. Malins: Typically, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point, which I am sure my hon. and learned Friend will have taken on board.

We have twin aims. One is to ensure that spending on the legal aid system does not get out of hand. There are signs at present that it is going up too fast. Secondly, a vital part of our democracy is that the poor are not disadvantaged and can start on an equal footing with the rich.

I shall support the Bill, because I think that the Government are right to tackle the problem and they have done so in a sensible way. However, a number of us will watch the position with great interest in the months and years ahead in the hope that those twin aims will be achieved.

5.18 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I start by welcoming the good parts of the Bill. Without repeating the list of four specific items enumerated by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), with which I agree——

Mr. Lawrence: There were five.

Mr. Carlile: I think that there were four, but we can consider that later.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) listed some of the deficiencies in the existing legal aid scheme. I agree that those deficiencies exist, and have become starker as the years have passed. On the whole, however, it can be said that the legal system has been available over the years to the very poor and to the very rich. It has been available to the very poor because generally they have been able to obtain legal aid. It has been available to the very rich because generally they have been able to buy their legal advice without its causing them too much anxiety. Generally speaking, it has not been available readily to those in the large middle income group which predominates, because they cannot afford to undertake the burden of lengthy litigation.

It seems to me that the Bill highlights a difference of philosophy, a difference between two strongly held opinions. The first, to which I would adhere, is that all citizens should have equality before the law. That means having a widespread legal aid system which enables individuals who are wronged to have their wrongs righted. The alternative view, to which the Bill seems to adhere, is

that legal aid should become less available and eventually should be reduced to the level of a safety valve for the poorest in society and in respect of only some aspects of our law. That is the philosophy behind the Bill and I regret it very much.

I should state my professional interest in this matter as a practising barrister working in the criminal and civil common law with which we are principally concerned and also as one of the secretaries of the joint all-party barristers group. Having said that, I should like, as it were, to remove my wig and look at the Bill from the viewpoint of the consumer.

The Bill sets up a legal aid board. From the consumer's point of view there is nothing wrong with a legal aid board. It would be fine if what was being set up was an independent board which was able to consider the merits across the law and what legal aid was required to deal with which items of legislation. That is not what the Bill provides. In my view, it is quite likely that the independent members of the legal aid board will find that they are part of a paper tiger. It will be a paper tiger for one clearly identifiable reason which I would suggest was more or less confessed to by the Solicitor-General; and if he did not confess, his denial was distinctly muted.

The reason is that legal aid is now, for the first time, to be cash limited by the Treasury; for the Bill is principally about the cash limitation of legal aid by the Treasury. That is bound to affect the performance and effectiveness of the legal aid board. This cannot be satisfactory for the consumer or for the organisations representing consumers.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Is the hon. and learned Gentleman suggesting that no cash limits should be applied to legal aid?

Mr. Carlile: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman by asking him if he thinks it is right that legal aid should be available to enable those who cannot afford to go to the law to enforce the law in their interests whatever the legislation with which they are concerned. If he believes that to be the case, the answer to his question is yes, and I am not ashamed of saying so. It seems to me to be the equitable and correct answer to the question.

A further matter which will concern the consumer very greatly if he considers the Bill is that the Bill merely sets out a legislative framework. Most of the legislation on legal aid will be made by statutory instrument. It will be made on the drip. That will enable the Treasury to tighten its grip on the tap from which such money as is available for legal aid flows. That seems to me to be profoundly unsatisfactory.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins), who is a very experienced solicitor, dealing with everyday legal problems, spoke about the green form scheme. The green form scheme throughout England and Wales has provided all citizens with ready access to straightforward legal advice on simple issues which a lawyer can solve easily but which a citizen may find extremely baffling. The dismantling of the green form scheme will mean that expert advice provided for the citizen will be less readily available.

I believe that with the best will in the world some of the agencies that will be required to provide first-step advice may not be able to give the same level of expertise. In the long run, the removal of the green form scheme will not reduce significantly the cost of legal aid.

In an intervention I raised the problems which many rural and small town solicitors feel that they will face as a result of the changes in contracting-out and tendering. In my constituency in mid-Wales, solicitors provide an immense range of services for the public, and when they do not know the answers they obtain counsel's opinion. Despite popular myth, one can obtain an opinion from a competent junior counsel at very little cost and present it to the client. The client will know or at least will believe that the advice is right. I hope that the legal aid board, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Solicitor-General and the Attorney-General will not allow anything to happen which will dismantle the fundamentals of the legal system throughout the shire counties of England and Wales.

The Solicitor-General spoke about fair remuneration as an acceptable principle and I accept his belief in that view. He then went on to describe his understanding, and the Government's expression, of the meaning of parts of the Bill dealing with the remuneration of lawyers. It is clear that, although the Government undoubtedly believe in giving lawyers fair remuneration, as the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said, they have decided deliberately to reject that principle and give them a little bit less than a fair remuneration.

If the Government start a scheme with this new piece of legislation with a little bit less than fair remuneration, and the Treasury gets its mucky paws on the scheme—as it will, sure as eggs is eggs—one can guarantee that a little bit less will turn into a fair amount less and a fair amount less will turn into a lot less than fair remuneration.

From the consumer's viewpoint, the consequence of that will be very serious. Under the existing system someone may apply through his solicitor for legal aid and if the case becomes more complicated he can apply on an objective basis for the extension of legal aid. Under the existing legal aid scheme he has been able to obtain legal advice of an equal quality compared with the other side.

Despite the 10 per cent., and later the 5 per cent. reduction, the lawyers have been pretty fairly remunerated, and in civil disputes for which legal aid has been available there has been broad equality of representation. That will no longer be the case because the principle of fair remuneration will be removed, and because of one further reason. The new regime for cash contributions to legal aid will penalise those whose cases are complex. I shall give an example. If a man is brain damaged in a road traffic accident, it can take years, however hard the solicitors work for him, for the case to be resolved. It can take years for all sorts of reasons, such as listing difficulties in London, tracing witnesses, but, above all, because of the time it takes to obtain a certain medical prognosis of the injury. In my experience, that can often take five or more years in a case where serious personal injury has been caused.

If cash contributions are to be made throughout the period for which the case continues, it will mean that the plaintiff will be less able to afford to make the contributions. Those of us who have appeared for and against insurance companies in personal injuries cases know that insurance companies understand litigation at least as well as anybody else. This proposal will encourage insurance companies to be dilatory and to deny liability until the last possible moment. They will not pay money into court and will put up every possible obstruction. Some insurance companies do that already and those of us in practice know who they are and so do they. The others

[Mr. Carlile]

will join them. The settlers will join the delayers because of the fact that a plaintiff has legal aid. The rules governing that legal aid are important considerations in the minds of insurance company general managers dealing with personal injury litigation.

There is not time to address the other deficiencies in the Bill. This is far too short a debate on such a major subject. However, I cannot let this opportunity pass without re-emphasising the fact that I believe that it is wrong that people are not able to obtain legal aid for tribunals or defamation actions. I look forward at some future date to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West answering the first question that I asked in my earlier intervention.

As the Bill stands I am afraid that it falls far short of satisfying the standard that I hope all hon. Members will set for it. It should provide for equality before the law for everyone; rich or poor, confident or lacking in confidence, whether they understand the law or whether, as is more often the case, it is a complete and baffling mystery to them.

5.32 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) complained about the time for the debate. I imagine that it was agreed between the usual channels. When this day was chosen I assumed that it was because large numbers of Opposition Members wished to be away to campaign in the local government elections. However, having heard the speech from the Opposition Front Bench, I now appreciate that it is because hon. Members for constituencies such as Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) could not have stomached hearing their Front Bench spokesman make elegant pleas for more money for lawyers. In fact, all the speeches from Opposition Members could be summed up by the two words, "More money." We have not heard anything about cost effectiveness or efficiency in the system, other than in speeches from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins). We have not heard any suggestion about how in matrimonial legal aid——

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baldry: With respect, I have only just started my speech, and this is a short debate.

As I was saying, we have not heard any suggestion about how we can make matrimonial legal aid more efficient. Lawyers are still remunerated on the basis of time spent and unit items, regardless of how many letters are sent and the value of those letters. Members of the Bar, who sometimes have to plough through bundles of solicitor-to-solicitor correspondence, wish that they could take them individually to the taxing master and say, "Large chunks of this are totally irrelevant." There is no discipline in the system and there is no incentive to make the system more effective or efficient.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West mentioned the way in which civil legal aid is administered. There has been no debate this afternoon as to how we can make that more efficient. I have grave doubts whether any of the court listing officers have ever seen a computer. It seems that everything is still hand written, and there is no sign of word processors being introduced. Those are areas——

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Has the hon. Gentleman ever been to a solicitor's office?

Mr. Baldry: Perhaps I should declare an interest. The Chamber now seems to be completely full of lawyers. I am a practising barrister. I have trudged through many far-flung and distant Crown and county courts in the past few months and seen how solicitors operate.

There has been a fourfold increase in legal aid costs since 1979—it has increased from £100 million to £400 million. There has been no suggestion as to how we can ensure that the consumers—it is they for whom we are concerned—receive good value. The poor individual who goes to see a solicitor on matrimonial legal aid does not always appreciate the full meaning of the Law Society's statutory charge. It is only when they come to sell their house that that begins to bite. If they understood that a bit more, we might see more efficiency and more determination to resolve disputes, not by confrontation and litigation but by conciliation. Again, it is only from Conservative Members that suggestions have been made as to how we may more properly conciliate.

It is sad that the only suggestions we have heard this week from the Law Society's professional body could also be summed up in the words, "More money." It mentions that some solicitors have given up doing legal aid work. That has been going on for a number of years, for very good reasons. Some firms of solicitors have set up to do criminal legal aid work and are operating a lot more effectively and efficiently than a generality of common law firms dabbling in and doing a little legal aid work here and there. Some firms specialise in criminal legal aid work. In practically every town on the circuit on which I practise there are now one or two firms of solicitors which are, and have been for the past few years, specialising in criminal legal aid work. That is not a reflection of the fact that they are badly remunerated, but simply that market forces exist in law just as anywhere else and it makes more sense for the service to be concentrated and for them to be able to deliver a service in the magistrates courts and Crown courts. Again, we have had no debate this afternoon about how that system could be improved.

Those of us who are practising barristers or solicitors know that there are areas of the law in which few members of the Bar and few solicitors are competent. Such areas include some aspects of welfare law where citizens advice bureaux have been set up for over a decade and are becoming much more professional. I welcome the fact that the Bill will extend the opportunities given to such agencies to provide a decent service and to ensure that people have the benefit of that advice. We have a variety of responsibilities in the House. We have a responsibility to see that people receive justice. We have a responsibility to see that the consumer is well served. We also have a responsibility to the taxpayer. A simple cry of "More money" is inadequate to meet the requirements of a society that is becoming more complex, where the rights and needs of the individual are becoming more complicated and where the tribunals at which they can appear are becoming more numerous.

I welcome the Bill because the present structure of legal aid, which has existed for many years, while being worth while, is not watertight. It is time to overhaul that system and introduce different disciplines and elements into the way in which the law is administered. I welcome the fact that on the new legal aid board there will be people with experience of management disciplines. I suspect that that will be a welcome introduction. The presence of people who have experience in personnel management will also be a welcome introduction to the way in which legal aid is administered.

May we, once and for all—although I suspect that it will detain the Standing Committee—hit on the head the debate about fair remuneration? It is, after all, not merely fair remuneration. One should always put it in its full context. It is fair remuneration for work actually and reasonably done. It is always historic; it always assumes a whole host of value judgments. What I might consider fair for a plea at Reading Crown court may well be very different from what the taxing master at Reading Crown court considers fair. There is always argument about value judgments. Under this proposal, such value judgments will be more accurately set out and there will be a greater understanding on the part of all involved of how people will be remunerated, and why.

A simple cry of "More money," without discussion of how we can make the system more cost effective and efficient, how to ensure that county and Crown courts operate more effectively and that time is used to better effect, and how listing officers—I am sure that they work hard—can be better served, with better technology with which to do their work, will mean that we are failing in our duty to ensure that people get justice and failing in our duty to the consumer and the taxpayer.

5.41 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), except to say that he made great play of the issue of failing to ensure that the consumer was well satisfied. I declare an interest as a non-practising solicitor. None of us who has dealt with legal aid cases has had complaints from the consumers of legal aid, except of the normal variety—"I should have won." The complaint behind and genesis of the Bill come from the Treasury because of the amount of money it spends. So some of the cant and sourness that we heard from the hon. Member for Banbury can be safely ignored.

I speak in the debate for two reasons. First, Andrew Roth described me as having the immoderate enthusiasm for the welfare state of a poor man's lawyer, to which I plead guilty. Any just society must provide for equal opportunity for redress of individual grievances, as well as grievances in the mass. The legal aid and advice schemes which have always tried to do that have been not the least significant pillar of the welfare state which, after all, was the historical foundation of the Legal Aid Acts. They aided 2 million people in the past year at a cost of £450 million. We are used to spending billions of pounds in the House without turning a hair, so it is ironic that the Government should cavil at the expense of £450 million to relieve the social tensions that are inherent in an increasingly complex society.

We must accept that it is the welfare aspect of the Legal Aid Acts which has incurred the disfavour of the Government. The Law Society and the noble Lords who debated the Bill in another place made a fundamental error in regarding the argument about the Bill as being one about the means chosen to achieve a set number of ends. It is not a debate about means; it is about ends. For all the smoothness and urbanity of the Lord Chancellor, the Government dislike the legal aid and advice scheme and want to destroy it step by step. They will do that not frontally, but with their well-known salami-slicing tactics, in which the Treasury will play an ever greater part. Why else would the Government include in the Bill such wide enabling powers, which enable all the details to be filled in by secondary legislation, much of which will go unconsidered by the House? Even if we consider it under the affirmative resolution procedure it will be unamendable. Either we take it as a whole or we leave it as a whole, but we cannot apply our collective wisdom to what is suggested.

The second reason why I speak is that my relevant experience derives from the area in which I live, in which I was born and which I represent. I have also practised there all my life. It is part of a county which, according to the current Government publication "Economic Trends", is the poorest in England and Wales. It has a GDP per head of £3,200, which is less than half the GDP per head in Greater London. How can there be any notion of justice in such an area without a substantial legal aid scheme? Without such a scheme the notion of justice would be as hollow as it was in the old legal joke, "Justice is open to all, like the Ritz hotel."

The Lord Chancellor, with his commercial and revenue practice, cannot possibly understand the way in which poor areas such as mine must depend on the legal aid scheme for justice in their legal dealings. Even less can the desiccated Brahmins who inhabit the upper reaches of the Lord Chancellor's Department understand that. Yet they are given substantial discretion by the Bill, of which one example will suffice.

No one who has acted in a personal injury case or who has practised in the provinces can think that the length of a case should determine a person's contribution to legal aid. There are three possible reasons why a case can be delayed. First, it can be delayed by the defendants and their insurance companies' solicitors and so on. Secondly, there can be delays because the medical position is not sufficiently clear for the specialist to give a prognosis that is enough to settle the case. The third reason is that the solicitor may be acting for a man who is himself at fault. The only common feature to all three is that they are not the fault of the assisted person. Why then should he be asked to pay more? Are we really to accept the patronising view that underlies this—that little people have little grievances? By making the legal aid contribution so large, the Government are ensuring that people cannot undertake legal action in long complicated cases.

We have already heard how the legal aid criteria have become less generous as time has gone on, and how fewer people are now eligible for aid than the numbers of whom previous Governments proudly boasted. It is the scientific expertise of the last Lord Chancellor that informs this debate. On a previous occasion when he tightened the limit he said that only 1,000 legal aid applications would be affected each year. It turned out that 4 per cent. of all applications were disqualified. That is the sort of scientific basis on which the White Paper rests and which is miserably embodied here in statutory form.

[Mr. Brynmor John]

We should be extending the notion of legal aid, not contracting it. First, we should do so for administrative tribunals. There is a sort of grim humour in the fact that the House is being asked to take welfare rights away from the green form scheme and from legal advice on the day after *The Times* reported the case of McQuorquadale *v.* the chief commissioner, in which a lady had to fight her case to the Court of Appeal on legal interpretation to stop the deduction of past maintenance payments from her benefit. That is how legalistic some of the framework of welfare rights is, and why it would be wholly disastrous for it to be detracted from, or for access to legal advice or other advice to be denied. We are, under the bland assumption of informality, doing a grave injustice to the people who have to go before welfare tribunals.

I am sorry to see that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has gone. I argued in Government, as well as in Opposition, that the country should seek a system of administrative law to replace the present chaotic jungle of different procedures and tribunals, and that we should have a proper administrative court. Legal aid will have to be available for that sort of justice.

There should also be legal aid in libel cases. The tabloid newspapers have longer rakes for their muck these days; they travel down into different spheres of society. It is a scandal when television believes that it has the right to try and to condemn people on programmes and legal aid is not available in cases of serious defamation. It means that a person's reputation is sacred only if he has the money to defend it.

I make a plea for the legal services committees. There has been one in the north-west of England for a long time and others have been proposed or started in south Wales and the north-east of England. Professional lawyers and many other people who are interested in the law, including welfare workers, get together to ensure that legal services are accessible to the consumers. The chief weakness in extending the legal services committees is the lack of assurance about funding. I do not mean accessibility of funds for a particular purpose but core funding which enables these committees to exist. Assurance of funding has made the north-west committee successful. I hope that even this Government will commit themselves to funding legal services committees of the south Wales and north-east England variety to secure the future.

Whatever the Government say, my view is that the Bill aims to cut legal aid expenditure significantly. The hon. Member for Banbury told us that all that the Opposition have done is to cry for more remuneration for lawyers. We do that because we want a comprehensive system of legal aid advice.

The new buzz word for activity in the law is commercial law, when one is not quite a business man and, in my view, not quite a lawyer either. These practices are set up around the cities. In my area of Pontypridd and the Rhondda, legal firms are not moving wholesale to commercial law, to advise on company flotations in areas in which sometimes there is up to 25 per cent. male unemployment. These firms are heavily dependent on legal aid but, in the past year, six solicitors—some of partner status—have left firms in the Rhonnda to go to firms elsewhere for higher remuneration and more fashionable work. They will not be replaced because of the current remuneration available in areas such as mine. Therefore, the legal aid service to people in my area—I am concerned with this rather than with professional remuneration—who have been injured or suffered matrimonial or other problems will be that much less. I find it offensive to say to my people—the accused, the victims of accidents and the matrimonial casualties—that they are not worthy of the same legal protection as the Ernest Saunders and Jeffrey Archers of this world.

When I decided to become a solicitor, professional status and remuneration were obviously important, but we also had a desire to serve our communities. These days, private practice is more at the whim of the accountants' stopwatch, and the legal profession is less caring. The Bill will signal to many that equality before the law is a hollow sham, a concept not backed up by the means to make it effective and a reality. Only by having a doctrine that is a reality can we have a society that will remain civilised and settle its disputes without regular and increasingly severe explosions of violence. No Government should imperil that concept of justice and equality before the law. Beneath all the fine words, smooth evasions and the bland formulae of the Bill, and the way in which it has been introduced in both Houses, is the underlying concept that the Government do not want to continue universal legal aid and equality before the law. I hope, therefore, that the Bill is denied a Second Reading.

5.45 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I speak as what might be described as a lapsed practising barrister. Therefore, I can be one of the few in the Chamber to plead disinterest rather than interest in what comes to the legal profession in remuneration or work. I practised chiefly in the criminal courts, mainly defending and doing legal aid work. I did criminal cases but also civil cases. I felt a sense of déjà vu on hearing today's comments on the lack of remuneration for the legal profession and on the second-class service that one always gets from legal aid cases compared with private funding. That was all said when I was called to the Bar in 1969. When I began practising, there was a Labour Government, followed by a Conservative Government and, in the 1970s, another Labour Government. There were still all the difficulties about remuneration of lawyers and the difference in pay between legally aided cases and those paid for privately.

I was interested to hear the comment of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) that the original intention was that there should be the same money for private litigants as for those who were legally aided. That was a myth when I practised, and I suspect that it always will be a myth. That is not to say that there should not be the same standards. I did not consider myself to be a second-class lawyer in the standards and service that I gave. Certainly I was young and not as well paid as many who were hitting the highlights, but by no means did I give a reduced standard of service to those whom I did my best to represent.

I was badly paid. I took dock briefs, which continued even during the so-called generous period of legal aid. I took the advice of Lord Keeper Guildford's grandfather, who said, "If you will be contented to be a great while getting a little, you will be a little while getting a great deal." Unfortunately, I did not stay at the Bar long enough to get the great deal. Since my experience, I have always

been an agnostic in the face of lawyers' claims that they suffer parsimony in their income, whether from legal aid or not.

Legal aid was in crisis in 1976 when I ceased practising at the Bar. One received far less because of the inflation in the early 1970s. Instead of earning a pound for a pound's work just before 1971 one got 10 shillings, and this became 50p for a pound's work by the time there had been two years of Labour Government. I left the Bar wondering when it would ever be sensibly remunerated. I saw the rebellion against the Lord Chancellor, to which, I regret, he gave way years later. We hear that the Bar is still badly remunerated. According to the practising lawyers, the legal profession is badly remunerated, yet lawyers get more and more and the number of practising lawyers, both solicitors and barristers, increases. It happens all over the country.

We have heard in this debate that some lawyers will cease to do the work. I like the idea of the 40 per cent. —not 40 per cent. who have given up the work but 40 per cent. who have either given it up or are considering doing so. Remember all the fuss—I am sure that you do, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you have a long memory—about how all the sharks and cowboys would take over conveyancing and the lawyers would withdraw from the scene and about how all the Elusian mysteries attached to conveyancing would not be understood by anyone who was not a lawyer. However, even solicitors have gone from strength to strength in conveyancing when competition and, dare I say it, market forces have been introduced. The professional approach of lawyers has been used in the same way, which has been welcome. I welcome the Bill because it carries forward those reforms.

Conveyancing introduced an element of business into the practices of solicitors and barristers, which they very much needed, and a recognition of trade and business, which in their view was not necessarily consistent with the professionalism for which, in my opinion, they overcharged. They now provide a better conveyancing service. We should not listen to the pleas of lawyers that this is the end of the world as they know it. We have heard it all before.

I agree with Opposition Members about the issue of equality before the law. Of course everybody should have equality before the law, but it is difficult to define who should receive legal aid and whether there should be cash limits. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) avoided answering my question about cash limits. At first he said that there should not be cash limits, but then agreed that there should be. Whatever service one provides there will always be cash limits. Cash limits should be made while ensuring that there is as much equality before the law as possible. However, there will never be a perfect system because there will always be those who feel hard done by and that they should have had their case heard before a court.

Every Government since 1949 have done their best, but only recently under this Government has legal aid increased in leaps and bounds. The number of people who enjoy legal services through legal aid and the amount spent on them have increased.

Much has changed since 1949; hon. Members' surgeries have changed very much over that period. Reference was made earlier to Dai Common Law. I am a Dai Common Law in my surgery as, I suspect, are other hon. Members. I spend much of my time not referring my constituents to lawyers. They are the last people to whom I refer them because I want them to live happy lives free of worry and conflict. People with grievances are often not happy people. I say to them, "For goodness sake, do not pursue this case. Do not feel aggrieved, but try to understand that life is tough. If you can swallow what you feel is a wrong, you will feel much happier. Once you get into the clutches of lawyers, you will never get out of them." I speak from a great deal of experience—perhaps I am the poacher turned gamekeeper. Having fallen, as an honest man, among lawyers many years ago, I speak with some experience.

Where do I send my constituents? I send them to the agencies in my constituency, such as the excellent citizens advice bureau. I want more money to be provided to citizens advice bureaux, and I think that that will happen as a result of the Bill. I send them to other specialist agencies that defend a particular interest. The ordinary people who staff those agencies are committed, as I am and other hon. Members, to helping ordinary people.

We have been hearing for many years that legal aid should be granted for tribunal cases. The problem is that tribunals were established in the 1940s to avoid the need to go to a lawyer. The original intention was to keep matters out of the hands of lawyers. There were to be tribunals where people spoke ordinary English, not Latin—we have heard only one Latin quotation today, thank goodness —that would be understood by all, and there would be no lawyers to make matters difficult. But the moment that legal matters are introduced into any tribunal, lawyers become involved.

Mr. John: Although the hon. Gentleman is speaking eloquently about informality, does he not think that the introduction into tribunals of the doctrine of precedent of commissioners' decisions blows his argument out of the water? The claimant does not have access to reports, but the insurance office and the tribunal do. It is like appearing before a secret society.

Mr. Martin: I am arguing that we should get rid of many tribunals and bring them into the mainstream of the courts. I do not understand why county courts are unable to do much of the work that is done by tribunals. I have much sympathy with what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said about an administrative law system. At some stage there will have to be a complete reform of the court system so that much of the work done by tribunals is returned to the mainstream of the legal system rather than put into separate compartments.

I hardly dare to suggest a programme for the Government as we have been crowding so much into the first parliamentary year, but perhaps we should be thinking of measures to take over the next three years. Perhaps we should undertake the sort of reforms that took place in the 19th century. We should be bringing more work into the mainstream of the legal system rather than, as we have been ever since 1949, creating ad hoc tribunals to deal with particular matters. Trying to obtain legal redress without involving lawyers is like trying to found a new hell without imps or, dare I say it, a new Parliament without Whips. It cannot be done because there must be one if there is the other.

As to the important matter of costs, I understand that under the Bill, if an unassisted party is sued by an applicant funded by the legal aid board and wins, he has no right to costs. It is a gross injustice that one can win a

[Mr. Martin]

case and pay the lawyers, but still find that, even though one's rights have been vindicated, one is left with costs to pay. The only way in which one can obtain costs from the legal aid board is if it can be shown that severe hardship has been suffered or it is considered just and equitable to be paid out of public funds. That is no more acceptable than the present system, under which the costs recovered by a successful party, whether assisted or unassisted, are not in practice fair.

I end with a quotation from Bacon, who likened the law courts to a bush to which a sheep runs for protection in a storm and is bound to lose some of his fleece.

6.7 pm

Mr Gordon Oakes (Halton): I shall be brief because a number of my hon. Friends want to take part in the debate.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) used a peculiar expression at the beginning of his speech. He said that he was a lapsed barrister. Having listened to his speech and heard the advice that he gives to his constituents, I understand why he used the term "lapsed barrister". One of my great fortunes is that I am not one of his constituents. Surely if a constituent comes to us about a legal matter, as they frequently do, we should send him to a solicitor, not an agency.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said that this was a Treasury Bill and a money Bill. I do not believe that. Money is always part of everything and it is a part of the Bill, but the matter goes much deeper than that. We have seen the Government attack local authorities, trade unions, the media and the BBC, but this is an attack on justice. The Bill creates a two-tier justice system, which is something that Britain has never known.

Let us consider some of the fundamental parts of the proposed scheme. Hon. Members have talked about the green form scheme. When I practised as a solicitor people frequently came to see me for advice under the green form scheme. That is the entry point for the legal profession. People do not know whether they have a case, so they come to solicitors for advice. Frequently, they do not have a case and they are advised on the green form scheme that that is so.

The Government scheme will do what the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South already does, which is send people to an agency, presumably something like the citizens advice bureau. I am second to no other hon. Member in my admiration for what the citizens advice bureaux do. Their offices are staffed by dedicated voluntary workers who attend courses to improve their efficiency in advising the public, and they do that without remuneration or financial reward. Another excellent organisation which helps at times of emergency is the medical profession. Do we feel that we do not need doctors? Do we say that they are not the people to deal with medical problems?

At the point of entry, one needs first-class advice. Hitherto we have had that. One can go to virtually any solicitor for advice. However, 40 per cent. of solicitors have decided that they will not be part of the scheme, and that was before this Bill. When the Bill, which excludes fair remuneration, goes through, that number will rise to 80 per cent., not because solicitors are uncaring, but because they will not be able to afford to do the work. They have their staffs to pay and their own remuneration to take, and they cannot afford to do legal aid work.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made an excellent point about fair remuneration. Of course the insurance companies, with their enormous resources and vast experience, will put every possible obstacle in the way if they know that the plaintiff in a case is legally aided. They will wear the solicitor out. It will be like pulling in a fish in a fishing match. So many obstacles will be put in his way that the solicitor will pull out because he cannot afford to go on. He will know that as there will no longer be the fair remuneration clause, although he can say that the defence has put so much in his way, and he has had to deal with all the nonsense that they have introduced, the legal aid board will still be able to tell him that he can have only a fixed fee and that he should have done all the work for less. In a civil defence case, the defence solicitors will know that perfectly well and will use it.

The ordinary citizen will be denied justice at the point of access, and there will be a two-tier system of justice. One will have advice from an unqualified, however devoted, person, as against that from a qualified person such as a solicitor who is accepted among the professions, and who has passed one of the hardest examinations to get into his profession. It is rightly difficult to get into that profession because one has to deal with a person's liberties and rights, so one must be properly qualified. Instead of such a qualified person, a volunteer may make the decision. The volunteer may be in the citizens advice bureau, but if he gives the wrong advice, can the citizen sue? He could sue a solicitor for wrong advice, but he cannot sue an agency. There is no way out. That is two-tier justice.

I deplore the fact that we are debating the Bill for such a short time. I have much to say, but I want my hon. Friends to have an opportunity to speak. This is one of the major Bills of the Session, and it is wrong to have only a three-hour debate on it. This is two-tier justice, which hitherto has been unknown in Britain. The Government are introducing it not merely for financial, but for political and philosophical reasons.

The Bill attacks the poor litigant rather than the rich insurance company which contributes to Conservative party funds. The Bill will attack the immigrant, who tends to be poor and who needs legal advice even more than citizens born here. It is a bad Bill and I hope that Conservative Members, many of whom respect the law, have been part of the law and believe—as I passionately do—in British justice, do not want to live in a country with a two-tier system of justice, with one law for the rich and another for the poor.

6.15 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): A great deal of the anxiety felt in the legal profession about this Bill stems from the disappearance of the words that were to be found in the previous legislation. They were:

"fair remuneration according to work actually and reasonably done."

The omission of those words causes worry. Solicitors, and my fellow barristers, see matters listed in clause 34(7) which the Lord Chancellor has to take into account. They see nothing particularly exceptionable in them but they ask themselves whether the omission of those words means that the principle of fair remuneration has been

abandoned. They then look at subsection (8) and see that the Lord Chancellor must consult the general council of the Bar and the Law Society and feel somewhat relieved. However, any such relief is dissipated when they look over the page and see that subsection (11) provides:

"No regulations shall be made under this section which include provision for the purposes mentioned in sub-section (2)(c) or (e) above except with the consent of the Treasury."

The anxiety stems from that.

I concede that inadequate remuneration can all too easily lead to inadequate performance and a fall in standards, but I ask my fellow members of the Bar and solicitors to have regard to the substantial increase in Government money and resources which have been devoted to the legal aid scheme in recent years. In 1978-79, it was running at about £100 million a year. This year, the figure will be close on £450 million. By any standard, that is a substantial increase. It is true that costs have also risen markedly during that period, but both branches of the profession have benefited substantially and it is right that I, as a practising barrister, should mention that I have shared in that benefit.

The trouble is that the demand for legal services, rather like the demand for the National Health Service, is virtually infinite. If demand is unleashed without proper regard to the costs of providing services, it will grow uncontrolled and will increasingly become a burden on the Exchequer. It will lead to the courts becoming clogged and to an increasingly severe strain being put on their operation.

I hope that the new legal aid board will ensure that members of the legal profession doing legal aid work are properly remunerated, and that lack of means does not cut anyone off from legal advice and representation when it is needed. However, it should maintain a far more careful scrutiny than has previously been the case as regards waste and abuse. The vast majority of practitioners are competent and scrupulous in ensuring that abuse does not occur. All of us who have practised in the courts know that some abuse and quite a lot of waste occurs nevertheless. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) mentioned the question of matters that should be dealt with in the magistrates court finding their way at considerably increased expense to the Crown court. That is an example of how costs could and should be saved.

All of us who practise know that in some cases people obtain legal aid who should not have obtained legal aid. We know that in far too many cases, through delay and inefficiency, proceedings meander on, causing frustration to litigants and unnecessary expense to the legal aid fund. The Legal Aid (General) Regulations 1980 already provide for sanctions in that regard. Regulation 104(1) provides:

" . . . on any taxation of an assisted person's costs in connection with proceedings (except authorised summary proceedings and proceedings in the Crown Court) any costs wasted by failure to conduct the proceedings with reasonable competence and expedition shall be disallowed or reduced . . . "

I believe and hope that the new legal aid board will make sure that such powers are used more rigorously. It is no good the professions calling for fair and reasonable remuneration unless we are prepared to allow the legal aid board to ensure that the waste and abuse, which to some extent exist, are kept under very tight control and eliminated as far as possible.

In general, I support the Bill's provisions wholeheartedly, but one important criticism that I have of it is that it leaves untouched the restrictions on the power of the courts to order payment of successful unassisted litigants' costs out of the legal aid fund. That matter was rightly raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin). The grant of legal aid puts the recipient in a very powerful position indeed. I listened with some astonishment to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who spoke of legally aided litigants being subjected to procedural delays and being left at the mercy of well-funded opponents who are privately financed. Far too often the boot is on the other foot, and the legally aided litigant is faced with a not particularly well-off litigant without legal aid. When that happens, the person without legal aid is virtually completely at the mercy of the legally aided litigant.

It is intolerably unfair that a litigant financing proceedings out of his own resources should not only face the disadvantage of conducting a case against a legally aided opponent but in all too many cases should find himself having to bear his own costs, even if he is successful. I am disappointed to discover that in clause 18 the old mistakes are repeated. Subsection (4) provides:

"An order under this section in respect of any costs may only be made if—

(a) an order for costs would be made in the proceedings apart from this Act."

That is obviously fair enough. The sting comes in subsection (4)(b):

"as respects the costs incurred in a court of first instance, those proceedings were instituted by the assisted party and the court is satisfied that the unassisted party will suffer severe financial hardship unless the order is made".

So a successful non-legally aided litigant in a court of first instance has no hope of obtaining an order for costs against a legally aided opponent unless the other party instituted the proceedings and, in addition, he can show that he, the non-legally aided litigant, would suffer severe financial hardship unless such an order was made.

If ever a case demonstrated the unfairness of that provision it was the case of Kelly v. London Transport Executive (1982), 1 WLR, 1055. In that case the plaintiff suffered a very minor accident indeed and concocted a vastly inflated amount of injury and damage flowing from it. The defendants paid £750 into court. The plaintiff did not take it. The defendants made an offer of £4,000 in desperation, to avoid the mounting costs, and he still did not take it. Eventually, he pressed the matter to a conclusion. The judge who heard the case found him to be an unscrupulous liar. His story was shown to be absolutely untrue. He was awarded just £75 in damages. Because the defendants were unable to bring themselves within the ambit of the provisions now contained in clause 18(4)(b), they received no costs at all, in spite of the fact that long before the hearing they had paid £750 into court and had later made an offer of £4,000. That is a grievous injustice.

It may be argued that such a reform would result in a very substantial amount of extra costs being incurred. I acknowledge that that is a risk and that that argument is important. However, it is a reform which should be considered. If the legal aid fund were at risk for costs, it would concentrate powerfully the minds of the legal aid board and of those acting for the legally aided party. That of itself could well lead to a saving in costs that would

[Mr. Michael Irvine]

counterbalance to some extent any extra expenditure that would have to be met if the reform that I suggest were made.

I strongly believe that the principle of fair and reasonable remuneration should be retained. However, we lawyers do ourselves no service if we think that by a wave of the hand we can rid ourselves of Treasury control. It is not right that we should do so. It is right that the Treasury should be there and that the legal aid board should bring its forces powerfully to bear on the problem of saving costs and making our legal system more efficient.

6.28 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): First, let me declare an interest. Unlike all the other hon. Members who have spoken, I am not, and never have been, a member of the legal profession. In the distant past, I was a consumer, and it is as a consumer that I want to speak to the Bill.

Like many hon. Members, I have received representations from many groups of people and many individuals who are worried about the effects of the Bill. They are concerned predominantly about the withdrawal of legal aid and advice from people who are often not able to fight for themselves. There is considerable concern, too, about the wide-ranging powers that the Bill gives to the Lord Chancellor to alter the scheme as and when he thinks fit.

The legal profession has expressed its misgivings at the removal of the administration of legal aid from the Law Society to the legal aid board, which is proposed in part II of the Bill. Incidentally, I do not see a proposal in the Bill for the postal ballot of all solicitors to elect the two solicitor representatives to the new board. Perhaps such ballots apply only to groups of workers in unions who are not allowed to have closed shops.

As a consumer I am greatly interested in the question, "Does the present system of control by the Law Society work and, if not, will the proposed system of a legal aid board be any better?" In what way should the Law Society keep control of the administration of public funds? The basic need is for a list of solicitors who hold practising certificates. As many hon. Members will be aware, subject to certain exceptions, a solicitor is not qualified to act as a solicitor unless he has a certificate issued by the Law Society authorising him to practise. He cannot recover his costs in respect of anything done if he does not hold a practising certificate. Indeed, on 25 November 1987 the Master of the Rolls said:

"A solicitor who practises without a certificate first of all commits a criminal offence and secondly is uninsured."

It should not be too difficult for a practising solicitor to remember to register by 31 October each year. However, it is surprising how many fail to do so and how few seem to be brought to account for that failure. Even when they are brought to account, the action taken is not known to the consumer.

Let us consider the case of a firm of solicitors, Messrs Blair Allison. One of my constituents notified the Solicitors Complaints Bureau that that firm had been practising uncertificated from 1 November 1986 to 28 January 1987. I wrote to the bureau on her behalf and received the following reply:

"practising certificates were only issued with effect from 28 January 1987 (and accordingly they had been practising uncertificated since 1 November 1986). An investigation was undertaken by the Bureau and these matters were considered by the Adjudication Committee at their meeting on 21 October last. Action was taken against the partners but I am afraid I am not in a position to let you know the Committee's decisions in respect thereof."

I asked what had happened about my constituent's complaint, what had happened to the money that the firm had made, and what had happened to any costs that may have been paid out in public money. The answer from the Solicitors Complaints Bureau was that we, the consumers, are not allowed to know.

I tabled a series of written questions to the Attorney-General on 25 January. I asked

"if he will take steps to establish a method of complaints against uncertificated solicitors which is more open to scrutiny than that of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau."

The answer was no. I also tabled a question to ask:

"if he will set up an inquiry into the manner in which the Solicitors Complaints Bureau conducts investigations, with respect to its standards of impartiality."

The answer again was no. I also asked

"what steps he will take to prevent the payment of legal aid moneys to uncertificated solicitors; and whether he will make a statement."

The Attorney-General replied:

"When the legal aid administration of the Law Society receives information that a solicitor has undertaken legal aid work whilst uncertificated, no payment is made for the work concerned. Action is taken to recoup any moneys already paid in respect of the appropriate period.

The next question I tabled asked:

"what was the amount of legal aid moneys recovered in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 and paid in respect of a solicitor who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate; and whether he will make a statement."

The reply was:

"The information requested is not available, but the practice of the legal aid head office is to recover all legal aid moneys paid in respect of a solicitor who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate."—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1988; Vol. 126, c. *449-50*.]

I studied the legal aid fund accounts for 1983 to 1986 and I could find no identifiable entry of money recovered from uncertificated solicitors. Therefore, how do we know the size of the problem? Indeed, in a written question to the Attorney-General on 5 February I asked:

"under which heading in the legal aid accounts for 1985-1986 are to be found sums recovered from solicitors who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate."

The answer was:

"Sums are recovered by deduction from subsequent payments to the solicitors concerned. Recoupments thus lead to the amount recorded in the legal aid accounts as 'solicitors' charges and counsel's fees being lower than would otherwise have been the case."

What kind of answer is that from an Attorney-General who discovers that solicitors have been acting uncertificated and claiming money from public funds. That was a little out of tune with his reply to my question on 5 February, which asked

"whether he will seek to strengthen the criminal law with the intention of reducing the number of uncertificated solicitors who are acting improperly."

The reply stated:

"I see no reason to do so. Criminal sanctions for an offence under section 20 of the Solicitors Act 1974 are already severe; penalties of imprisonment for not more than two years, a fine, or both may be imposed. Specific offences relating to the commission of certain prohibited acts attract other penalties under the Solicitors Act 1974."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1988; Vol 126, c. *772*.]

Let us consider claims for payment from the legal aid fund—the so-called green form claims submitted by the

legal profession. Is the House aware that green form claims are retained for only 12 months after the end of the financial year in which payment of the claim was authorised? Even if a solicitor was found to have been practising uncertificated, the green form giving the detail of the claim would have been destroyed. Unless the case was considered quickly—the Law Society is not known for its speed—there would be no evidence.

How does one prevent the forms from being destroyed on 31 March each year? How does an ordinary citizen, who wishes the Solicitors Complaints Bureau to investigate a complaint, prevent the destruction of such forms? The answer is to take the matter to the High Court, as did Mrs. Peasgood, one of my constituents who prepared and presented her case. She made an application for an order against the secretary general of the Law Society, last year's president of the Law Society, the current president of the Law Society, the director of the legal aid head office, the regional director of legal aid head office, the Chester area director of the legal aid office, two assistant directors at Chester, the director of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau, a solicitor who dealt with complaints at that bureau and the Law Society.

Mrs. Peasgood asked for an order under section 51 of the Solicitors Act 1974 to require the defendants to answer allegations contained in her affidavit of conduct unbefiting solicitors. Two of those allegations were:

"Conspiracy to conceal illegal conduct and to conceal dishonesty . . . cheating the public revenue."

My constituent was refused legal aid. She took that action not in an attempt to discredit the system or the individuals named, but to make them answerable to ordinary people whose money they are spending. In the course of her action she considered some of the part-time chairmen of the social security tribunal who are practising solicitors. She discovered that some of them seemed to have been practising uncertificated. Thus there appear to be solicitors sitting in judgment on others while acting criminally themselves.

Are the Law Society and the Solicitors Complaints Bureau the correct bodies to run the legal aid scheme? Surely the answer must be no. Will the new legal aid board under the control of the Lord Chancellor do any better, given that he moves with the wind in whatever direction it sends him? The answer must be no.

The Bill has been presented by a Government who are dedicated to control the trade unions by crippling them and by making unnecessary laws against the workers. They have presented this Bill for their predominantly middle-class solicitor friends, and it offers little control over the distribution of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. It allows hundreds of solicitors to continue to practise illegally, indeed criminally. The Bill demonstrates that, yet again, the Government are ignoring the needs of those in our society who most need help. We should oppose it.

6.39 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): One of the fundamental duties of Parliament is to sustain and support the fair and efficient administration of justice and the exercise of individual civil rights. When a Legal Aid Bill comes before the House, it should be an occasion on which we can celebrate the strengthening of our system of justice and equality before the law—a phrase to which many right hon. and hon. Members have attached importance. It should be an occasion when we push forward the frontiers of representation, for example, before coroners, before tribunals and in serious defamation cases.

The numbers of tribunals and their importance have multiplied immensely since the modern legal aid system was introduced. The judgment of an immigration appeals tribunal can often be a matter of life and death. Tribunal awards in unfair dismissal cases often exceed amounts within the county court jurisdiction. Class actions are becoming increasingly important, not just for the consumers of drugs but for the residential occupants of estates, whether privately or publicly owned. The Bill should be an occasion to reverse the tendency towards a first and second-class standard of legal representation, which has worried hon. Members. The Bill should reinforce the proposition that legal rights are valueless unless the means to be aware of them exist.

Unfortunately, the Bill does not rise to those occasions. Instead, it is a vehicle mainly to enable the Treasury to hack £10 million off legal aid expenditure and to cash-limit the money that is available for legal aid purposes. As has been the case with other social legislation—health, housing, pensions and social security—it is a device to get people to pay more but receive less. The Bill will not reverse the trend towards a smaller proportion of people of moderate means having access to the courts for the redress of legitimate grievances.

The definition of legal aid by the Rushcliffe committee —repeated by the Solicitor-General—was that the real test of "small and moderate means" should be a test of those means in relation to the probable cost of the proceedings, without unreasonable deprivation of the litigant. In many European jurisdictions the test for moderate means is based on the amount to be expended. An example of how the system operates in this country is that if any person has a disposable income exceeding £110 per week, which is not a great deal of money, or capital exceeding £5,000, no legal aid is available for representation no matter the size or cost of the case, although some advice may be given.

I offer as an example the case of an elderly couple with more than £5,000 in the bank. They find that their retirement home is falling apart because of alleged negligence by a well-known firm of builders or an architect. That couple must gamble their life savings on the result of a court case. In those circumstances, no one could argue that their means are not small and moderate in relation to the issue involved. The Bill does nothing to meet the case where an elderly couple are expected to exhaust their saved capital before receiving any assistance from the state. In a case where the defendant is affluent or is protected by an insurance company and the couple have spent all their savings on the fees of expert witnesses and counsel, they should then qualify for legal aid because their disposable income is less than £110 a week. The new law will make it less likely that they will pursue their case or succeed, because their period of contribution will go beyond one year. That will make it more difficult for them to obtain justice. The existing system falls short of equal or adequate access.

The National Consumer Council provided me with several examples. Although about 2 million rented homes are in serious disrepair, last year only about 1,500 housing cases came before the courts. Only 8 per cent. of defendants who risk losing their homes because of possession proceedings are legally represented. About 85

[Mr. John Fraser]

per cent. of people who are injured at work and are off work for more than two weeks do not take the first step to obtain civil redress for the injury which they have suffered.

Despite what the Solicitor-General said about increased expenditure on legal aid, a smaller and smaller proportion of the population is now eligible for legal aid. Of course, the Government had to extend criminal legal aid and advice to prisoners at police stations as a price for obtaining the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Having paid that price, they are now trying to penalise the legal aid system by attempting to get back some of the money lost as a consequence of that Act.

I am grateful to Mr. Cyril Glasser, who wrote an article in the *Law Society's Gazette* on 9 March 1988. He describes in that article the extent to which the cover of legal aid in general has decreased. He said in that article:

"During the period of 1979-86, an estimated 13 million people, representing over 25 per cent. of the population, went out of scope for eligibility on income grounds alone. These figures may well have substantially increased over the last two years, so that only just over half the population now qualifies, compared with well over 80 per cent. in 1979."

Because of lack of time, I shall not give the other statistics that he has usefully stated there. However, it is clear that, whatever the pattern of expenditure on legal aid might be, the number of people—the number of two-parent households in particular—who qualify for legal aid has reduced substantially since 1979.

In the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), the Bill is a missed opportunity. The script for the Bill may have been written by the Lord Chancellor, but the real plot has been devised by the Treasury. The real face behind the mask is found in the penultimate paragraph of the explanatory memorandum to the Bill, which talks about a consolidated saving in public expenditure. In the words of the National Consumer Council, we do not believe that the Bill will improve access to justice.

In the time available, I cannot deal with the many and detailed points which have been raised. However, I endorse the views of many hon. Members about the preservation of the legal aid advisory committee. At the beginning of a new scheme, there should be no time limit on how long that advisory committee runs. In many of our national industries and in other areas, for example, in health administration, it is not unknown to have one system of administration for executing a scheme and to have a consumer representative body, rather like the legal aid advisory committee and the social security advisory committee, to comment on what is happening. I endorse the comments of many of my hon. Friends and many Conservative Members on the preservation of the independence of the new legal aid board.

I hope that the Government will not remove from criminal courts the ability to award criminal legal aid on the spot, particularly when the defendant is in custody. The criminal court deals with the urgent question of whether a person should be at liberty and the level of assistance which he should have when before the court. No one is in a better position to judge the eligibility for legal aid on merit. I am not now talking about legal aid on the basis of income.

We agree with many commentators that contracting-out means obtaining advice on the cheap. In the words of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, they will not accept advice on the cheap or arrangements which will damage their relationship with other agencies or with the legal profession. There is a great danger, particularly in the less populous parts of the country, of creating a monopoly of advice which is given by people who may not be subject to professional codes of ethics. That may put them into conflict with those to whom they will subsequently have to refer cases.

The professions will have to negotiate remuneration with the Treasury. That has always been the case, but I can see no justification for taking out of the wording of the existing legislation the provision for remuneration for

"work actually and reasonably done."

Of course, the professions will always be accused of special pleading, but the Attorney-General is aware of the problems in the magistrates courts in London, the difficulties of obtaining clerks and running our systems of justice properly because the rate for the job is not being paid to magistrates' clerks. He is also aware of the problems with the Crown Prosecution Service because the right rate for the job is not being paid. He knows that the system of justice continues to break down because there is not fair remuneration for

"work actually and reasonably done."

There are plenty of examples outside the legal aid scheme of the difficulties that will be encountered if the Lord Chancellor intends to impose upon the profession a system of remuneration that does not bear fair comparison with salaries elsewhere.

When the Lord Chancellor introduced the Bill in the other place, he described it as

"the framework for the legal aid scheme through into the next century."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 December 1987; Vol. 491, c. 605.]

The trouble is that it is not so much a framework as a frame without a picture. The picture will have to be painted in by 53 regulation-making powers that the Lord Chancellor assumes in the Bill. It will have to be painted in through the guidance that he is entitled to give to the legal aid board. It will have to be painted in by the partly hidden hand of the Treasury. The Bill, by its history, letter or spirit, does not seek to reinforce or extend the legal aid service.

One of the Government's principles is give and take. Yesterday, they gave in the debate on one of the clauses of the Finance Bill; today, they take. The Bill represents not the open hand of justice, but the tight fist of the Treasury. For those reasons, and because of the hidden agenda behind the Bill, we shall vote against it.

6.52 pm

The Solicitor-General: This has been an interesting debate with three themes. First, there is a wide welcome for the new framework set by the Bill, but there were some major misapprehensions in the speeches of hon. Members, particularly of Labour Members, and some reassurances were sought.

The first major misapprehension concerns funding. I want to state as firmly as possible that it is nonsense to talk of cuts or a second-class service. The legal aid system is demand led today and it will continue to be demand led under the new system.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), with the Welsh hwyl steaming in particularly fine form, sought to depict my noble and learned Friend the

Lord Chancellor as someone who might easily be seen as dancing to the Treasury's tune, clutching a poisoned chalice. Those hon. Members who know my noble and learned Friend will find that difficult to believe.

We spent rather a long time on the question of fair remuneration for the legal profession. I wish to draw the House's attention to the criteria set out in clause 34(7). The Law Society, for example, has said that its overheads will not be covered. It has been suggested that there will not be sufficient barristers and solicitors to provide the service required. However, one finds in that clause those specfic matters that the Lord Chancellor must take into account. That is a much firmer and better safeguard than the inevitably imprecise concept of fairness. The Lord Chancellor made it clear that we shall be fair and the Bill enshrines the sensible criteria to achieve that.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde) *rose*——

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

The Solicitor-General : No, I shall not give way. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman several times and I want to try to answer the points raised in the debate. However, I shall give way to my hon. Friend as he has been here throughout the debate.

Mr. Jack: Will my hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity to review the speed of payments to solicitors undertaking such work? That point has been drawn to my attention by solicitors in my constituency who believe that the present system is slow. Will he also, either now or later by letter, answer the point about the Bill's treatment of conveyancing and wills, particularly in respect of testamentary guardianship?

The Solicitor-General: I promise my hon. Friend that we shall consider those points carefully. Other aspects regarding speed of payment have already been carefully considered in recent months and I well understand my hon. Friend's point. Although my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has been heavily engaged elsewhere, he will know that we are considering that aspect.

I was asked directly by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon whether I accepted the figures in the Law Society's briefing. We shall listen carefully to the Law Society's comments, but that briefing does not come up to the standard that we might have expected from the Law Society. It argues that 27 per cent. of solicitors are ceasing to do matrimonial work, but I have studied that briefing and I see that the hard facts show that, over the past five years, almost double the number of solicitors have come into matrimonial work as have left it. That does not appear to be a sound basis for that statistic.

We also regard as ill-founded the Law Society's claim that 25 per cent. of people have ceased to be eligible for legal aid over the past few years. It is a difficult matter to work out and Mr. Glasser, whose article I have read, makes that clear. However, one can obtain legal aid in many circumstances with an income well above the national average. As the country becomes richer, that may lead to some change in the proportions, but the figure is not to be accepted.

In the time left to me I shall seek to give reassurance on a few important points. The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), among others, asked about tribunal representations. The Lord Chancellor is carrying out research on that matter and, when it has been completed, we shall consider it, particularly in relation to one of our priorities, social security commissioners. That is a particularly complex issue, but we shall take no lectures from Opposition Members because, in all the years that they were in government, they did nothing about Strasbourg, defamation, industrial tribunals, social security tribunals and coroners. It is rich for them to suggest that we should have put all those matters right at a time when legal aid expenditure has been increasing at an exponential rate, precisely because the service is demand led. It is nonsense to suggest that we are proposing to dismantle the green form scheme. Many advice agencies do a pretty good job in giving advice on specialised matters, such as welfare benefits. Nothing will be forced upon them, but they will have the opportunity to enter into freely agreed contracts to provide that advice in limited areas and only then will the green form scheme be withdrawn.

High standards of service are part of our priority. The opportunity for appeals on criminal legal aid will remain. I give that assurance to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton. The board will be able to fund legal services committees if it thinks right. That is my response to the remarks of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). The legal aid advisory committee can continue if that be thought right and if the Lord Chancellor and the board think that helpful. Decisions on criminal legal aid will remain with the courts unless and until it seems wise and sensible to do anything different.

The aim of the Bill is to provide the litigant, who would otherwise be unable on account of his means to obtain advice, assistance or representation, with a legal aid system that is efficient and effective and gives value for money both for him and for the taxpayer. We wish to create a system that is capable of evolving to meet the challenges of the decades ahead.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:-

The House divided: Ayes 242, Noes 147.

Division No. 285] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Aitken, Jonathan	Brazier, Julian
Alexander, Richard	Bright, Graham
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Allason, Rupert	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Amess, David	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Amos, Alan	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Buck, Sir Antony
Aspinwall, Jack	Budgen, Nicholas
Atkins, Robert	Burns, Simon
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Butler, Chris
Batiste, Spencer	Butterfill, John
Beggs, Roy	Carrington, Matthew
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Cartliss, Michael
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cash, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Chapman, Sydney
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Chope, Christopher
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Boswell, Tim	Critchley, Julian
Bottomley, Peter	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Day, Stephen
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dorrell, Stephen
Bowis, John	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James

Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

LEGAL AID BILL *[LORDS] [MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Legal Aid Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required for payments by the Lord Chancellor to the Legal Aid Board established by the Act;

(b) any other expenses of the Lord Chancellor under the Act; and

(c) any increase in the expenses of any other Minister of the Crown attributable to the discharge of functions under the Act.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Rover Group

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

7.14 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The Government and the board of Rover Group have always looked forward to the day when the businesses of the Rover Group could be returned to full private ownership. That became a firm political commitment for the Government in the 1983 Conservative manifesto for the general election. We believe that a huge manufacturing business of this kind performs best under commercial management and subject to the normal demands of the market place. The interests of employees, suppliers and dealers are best served when the company is able to raise its capital, to invest and to make strategic decisions without the direct supervision and intervention of Ministers, Whitehall or Westminster.

Indeed as evidence of that claim I want to stress that privatisation has already brought benefits to the former parts of the group that have been liberated from state ownership. Jaguar has increased both production and employment since its flotation in 1984 and its excellent products are sought after across the world. Employees in Unipart have seen the value of their shares rise as that firm's profitability has grown since privatisation. The same applies to Istel, the information technology group. Leyland-DAF, in which Rover Group holds a 40 per cent. stake, has seen recent announcements of increased United Kingdom productivity and production. Jaguar Rover Australia is also trading profitably. Indeed all the privatised businesses where the Rover Group has maintained a minority stake are now contributing to the group's profitability.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): While the Minister is recounting the list of former Rover Group businesses, especially those from Coventry, would he like to complete the list and add Alvis, the tank manufacturers in Coventry which is proposing to close its city centre site and which has shed hundreds of jobs since privatisation, Self-Changing Gears, the gearbox manufacturers, which, within six weeks of privatisation, sacked 20 per cent. of the work force, and, primarily, Coventry Climax—the factory which I live next door to and which is 10 yards from my back gate—which, after privatisation in 1981 when it had a work force of 3,000, shed 80 per cent. of that work force in five years? In Coventry we do not believe the Government when they argue for the supposed benefits of privatisation. Our experience in Coventry, Jaguar notwithstanding, is not what the Minister claims.

Mr. Clarke: Neither nationalisation nor privatisation can guarantee commercial success or sustained employment. I suppose that we have seen the biggest drops in employment in some of the great nationalised industries such as steel, ship building and others. Where the products can be sold successfully and the industry is not overmanned, the companies have a secure future.

The companies that I have mentioned have been enabled to take advantage of their position in the market place. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is perfectly aware of the background to the

[Mr. Clarke]

companies to which he referred. He is also aware that the overmanning in some of those businesses was bound to be reduced, no matter who owned the company.

My examples show that the best parts of the Rover Group, when privatised, have thrived under privatisation, and employees and customers have benefited.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): We are of course accustomed to the Minister's traditional introduction to this type of debate. Where is the evidence that privatisation and a change of ownership have made a difference? Surely all the evidence, even according to the Minister's statements, shows that ownership, in itself, makes very little difference.

Mr. Clarke: I always make this traditional opening to my speeches on privatisation because, having debated nationalisation and privatisation so often over the past six or seven years, I hope that the argument is now won. The general public must be aware that the climate has changed with regard to state ownership of manufacturing.

I concede that, in itself, the change of ownership does not produce the change. The management of the company is freed from the constraints of the Treasury, Ministers like myself, the officials who support me and the attempts of the House to interfere politically in what are essentially management and commercial decisions. That gives the best companies the prospect of thriving more than they otherwise would have thrived so long as they are not nationalised and are returned to the private sector. That is our belief and we are now at the stage where the Rover Group has made steady progress and has reached the point where privatisation on acceptable terms is not just a prospect but a reality.

I pay tribute to Graham Day's two years at the helm. It is a tribute to his performance that Rover should just have reported its best trading performance for nine years. At the operating level, performance was turned round from a loss of nearly £0·25 billion in 1986 to a positive result. That has been achieved on the back of record exports. At home, the group has improved the reputation of its products and is paying greater attention to the needs of its customers.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pay tribute to Red Robbo and to his contribution in the past, I shall happily give way.

Mr. Gould: It is simply that I must have misheard the Minister. He surely did not use the words "record exports", did he?

Mr. Clarke: I did, and I shall repeat them—based, as they are, on what I regard as excellent briefing. The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I have been misled. I believe that a record export performance has been achieved for the Rover Group's present companies.

As the House may have inferred from my opening remarks, I do not anticipate a great deal of controversy in the debate about the principle of privatisation. I take it almost for granted that for the world at large the argument is won. I shall find out in due course whether this is one of the days when the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is in favour of renationalising the company—no doubt we shall come to that later. I believe that the House is mostly interested today in the way in which we have chosen to privatise the group and the terms of the proposed sale. I shall seek to satisfy the House that that method and those terms are fair, sensible and a good bargain for the taxpayer and for the company.

The Rover Group has the kind of business which cannot easily sustain uncertainty about its future. The House will recall that, when there were rumours that various bidders were in the field in 1986, they had a very adverse effect on the state of the company. During that period of speculation, the group lost £250 million worth of sales and 2 per cent. of its market share, which it has never since recovered.

It is for that reason that when British Aerospace, having talked to Rover Group in the first place, made its approach to the Government, we were determined to handle the situation in a way that would not risk damaging the group. There are those who argue that we should have thrown open the question of purchasing the Rover Group to a variety of bidders. I can only say that I believe that such a prospect would have been grossly irresponsible in respect of a business occupying such an important role in this major industry. The strong advice that we received, particularly from Graham Day and the board of Rover Group, was that we should accept British Aerospace's request that sale negotiations should be on an exclusive basis for a limited period. In my opinion, it would have been reckless to ignore that advice.

In considering the proposals from British Aerospace, we first satisfied ourselves that such a solution would give Rover Group the opportunity to develop its independent role in the vehicle industry. British Aerospace is strongly committed to the future development and growth of Rover Group and is looking to build on the strategy and progress made by the existing Rover Group management. We underlined that commitment in the negotiations which took place between the Government and British Aerospace through the conditions we introduced—particularly those intended to control on-sale.

The deal we concluded ensures that were British Aerospace to decide for some reason to relinquish control within five years the principal subsidiaries of Rover Group, their principal registered trade marks or any substantial part of the undertakings of those subsidiaries, British Aerospace could be required to repay any net economic benefit. That means that it could be not worth while financially for British Aerospace to contemplate any of those steps, which it is not contemplating in any event. That provision is in no way meant to inhibit the commercial freedom of management to run those businesses or to exploit opportunities as they see fit. What it will do, I believe, is contribute to a period of stability in which the Rover Group may operate.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Will the Minister tell the House his definition of a "substantial part" of the undertakings of the subsidiaries? Will he also make clear to the House whether British Aerospace will actually be required to forgo any of the advantages it has enjoyed? The Minister significantly used the phrase "could be required". Will he clarify that point?

Mr. Clarke: We have not defined that aspect in any substantial or quantified terms—it will be a matter for judgment at the time. Plainly, one can consider extremes.

A small site or particular building might be shed without the terms I have mentioned being relevant. On the other hand, the sale of a substantial part of the business, if it were a significant part of the business, would certainly mean that the conditions would apply. As to the hon. Gentleman's second point, he is quite right, in that we have not made the conditions inflexible. It is not necessarily the case that they will be insisted upon by the Government. That provides for the possibility that there could be favourable circumstances in which the Government decide that it is in the public interest, as well as in the interests of the company, that such permission should be given. There might be some perfectly desirable commercial reason, raising no controversy on either side of the House, why that should be done.

Circumstances might arise in which British Aerospace wished to dispose of a subsidiary company. Therefore, we leave open the possibility that the Government might waive the condition. For the moment, British Aerospace has no intention of doing any of the things I have talked about, which I believe is why it accepted that condition. We do not foresee any circumstances in which we would want to see an on-sale of the kind I have described. However, we would expect the conditions to bite if British Aerospace suddenly decided to sell for reasons that were not readily accepted as being in the public interest.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Does the Minister accept that when his Conservative predecessors were willing 20 years ago to give similar assurances in good faith about Chrysler, those pieces of paper were worth nothing in the end? My hon. Friends and I are entitled to press the Minister about what would happen if the events which the Minister does not envisage happening did happen. Suppose that there was a disagreement about what is a significant or substantial part of the business. How would that dispute be settled? Would the Government have the last word in defining what is significant or substantial, in their judgment? What if the management and directors of British Aerospace disagreed? Will there eventually be legal wrangles and court cases?

Mr. Clarke: Any contract can give rise to the possibility of litigation, but the parties to any sensible contract do not contemplate engaging in litigation. I cannot enter into discussion about what might happen if a dispute arose between the Government and British Aerospace about what comprised a "substantial part" of the business. I do not believe that anyone could put forward a tight, quantitative definition of what is meant by "substantial". It is one of those words that most people would find no difficulty in applying to a set situation.

I described those terms to the House because I believe they give a valuable assurance that the group will enjoy a period of stability. They reinforce the stated commitment of British Aerospace to acquire the businesses as going concerns and to develop them. I do not expect that the conditions will give rise to difficulties, and it is not fruitful to speculate what might happen if they did. Those conditions are not inflexible because circumstances might arise in which, for example, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) might press on Ministers the case for permitting British Aerospace without penalty to sell a subsidiary to another purchaser, when that was thought to be desirable by everybody. It is right that we should not make the terms bite automatically when one of the interested parties wishes them to do so.

In negotiating terms with British Aerospace, the Government were aware mainly of the burden of debt borne by the Rover Group, which had been built up through years of accumulated losses. The banks had been willing to finance that debt only on the strength of the Government's involvement. We faced the situation—and we face it now—that whatever route was adopted for the company's return to full private ownership, and whatever sale was considered to any purchaser, it would be necessary to tackle the debt problem. Those losses were historic and irrecoverable. The bank indebtedness had to be taken off the back of the new owners—as it would have to be taken off the back of any new owners who might be interested in the group.

Therefore, the Government agreed that it was right to make a cash injection of £800 million to deal with that indebtedness. That was our calculation and reasonable judgment of the level of the indebtedness likely to exist at the time of the sale. With that slate wiped clean, we were able to conclude an agreement for the sale of the Government shareholding for £150 million. That purchase price reflects of course a balance between the prospects and the risks now in the business. However, in judging that deal—which is, I believe, the principal point of interest in the debate—it is necessary to appreciate all the elements of the agreement.

In addition to the £800 million historic debts that the Government are wiping clean and the £150 million being received for the Government shareholding, the taxpayer will benefit from the fact that some £1·1 billion of Rover Group's trading tax losses will effectively be eliminated. That reduces by about two thirds the amount that would otherwise be available to offset against future Rover Group profits. The hon. Member for Dagenham laughs, but that is worth about £400 million to the British taxpayer.

Moreover, BAe and the Government have agreed that the other currently available tax reliefs within the Rover Group will be applicable only within Rover's businesses. It is also an immense relief to most hon. Members—as it certainly should be to taxpayers—to see the prospective extinction of the contingent liability represented by the Yarley-Marshall assurances on the group's obligations—a potential liability that now stands at about £1·6 billion.

Taking into account those features of the deal, I hope that hon. Members will see why, viewed as a whole, it is a good, sensible, realistic bargain for the Government and the company.

Mr. Gould: I am sorry to intervene again, but I am fearful that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is about to leave the subject of financial arrangements. Let me say in passing that it is a novel doctrine that wiping off a debt owed to the taxpayer is somehow to the taxpayer's advantage.

I want to ask about the £800 million that the Minister described, in a somewhat confusing way, in two different parts of his speech. As I understand it, it is—as he described it initially—a cash injection. Will he tell the House how much of that £800 million is needed to eliminate debts, and how much is properly to be regarded as simply a cash gift to the new proprietors of Rover if the deal goes through?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman ought to have a look at the position of tax losses. Accumulated tax losses of the kind that I am talking about are a potential asset of a company such as this, because it is possible to offset future profits against them. By wiping off all but £500 million of the tax losses, the taxpayer frees himself from £400 million worth of potential cost in the future. This is genuine indebtedness. It is not a cash injection into the company.

Mr. Gould: All of it?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, all of it. It is a reasonable calculation of the level of indebtedness at the time of completion of sale. It is arrived at by a combination of the present indebtedness, the likely accumulation of further indebtedness by the time of conclusion of sale and some outstanding liabilities still to be incurred, which relate to the restructuring of Leyland-DAF last year. The figure was arrived at on that calculation and no other basis.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful for that information. For the sake of completeness and accuracy, will the Minister now quantify the various elements that he has described as making up the £800 million?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly—if you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will forgive me for giving way so often in such a short debate. I had prepared a reasonably short speech. I shall have to stop giving way soon.

The debt position at the end of 1987 comprised short-term borrowings of £400·1 million, and amounts falling due after more than one year of £228·7 million. From those figures, cash and short-term investments of £42 million must be deducted. That leaves a total immediate debt at the end of 1987 of £585·8 million. To that figure must be added the part of the money provided in March 1987 for announced future restructuring in the commercial vehicle businesses, which has yet to be spent. The remainder of the £800 million takes account of changes that we estimate will take place in the group's indebtedness between the end of 1987 and completion of the sale in the summer. It is important that hon. Members and the European Commission understand how we arrived at that figure.

As I have said, the deal is a sensible and realistic bargain, satisfying the genuine interests of both parties. The Government were concerned that the merger of these two major manufacturing groups should move forward only on a firm financial footing, and I believe that the House should share that desire. BAe has expressed its confidence that the enlarged group will be able to support development programmes in the combined businesses.

As I explained to the House on 29 March, the proposed cash injection is subject to the completion of the normal European Community procedures. The Community applies rules which we accept and support. It must be ensured that the cash injections are legitimate and in accordance with the Community rules before they are allowed to proceed.

Following the meetings between my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State and Commissioner Sutherland in March, we have continued to assist the Commission to reach a full understanding of the Government's objectives and proposals. Following its usual practice, the Commission has also invited comments from other member states and interested parties on the state aid proposal. I hope that the House will understand that it would be wrong of me to pre-empt the Commission by making any further comment on the progress of its studies. I am glad to say that the Commission is acting with expedition, and I am confident that it realises the need, in the interests of the business, to reach a conclusion and will—within the necessary confines of its procedures—seek to achieve a speedy resolution of its examination.

I expect some hon. Members to attack the terms on the basis that they are too favourable to BAe and Rover Group. That, indeed, was the implication of some of the murmurings a few moments ago. Some people attacked the terms on that basis when I made my original statement on the deal. I hope that the European Commission will not be influenced by such claims, because, when made in the House, they will probably be made on a political rather than a well-informed basis.

I also hope that hon. Members who are tempted to make such criticisms will ask themselves what is their aim and purpose in doing so. Do they want to threaten the deal with BAe, so that we return to uncertainty over privatisation and the Rover Group can be bid for again by all comers? Do they want BAe and the Rover Group to trade in a more cash-constrained way, and with a burden of debt? When I made the statement, I thought that some Opposition Members who attacked the terms had no idea of the point of the criticisms that they put forward, although I realise that some contemplate permanent nationalisation as the only future for the group.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Perhaps I can help the Minister. Let me explain why I feel that the matter is a subject for inquiry. When BAe was privatised, having received a cash injection of £400 million, eyebrows were naturally raised outside the House, as well as on the Opposition Benches. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) leaves the Cabinet and the chairmanship of the Tory party to become adviser to the chairman of BAe. Then, hey presto! Out of the blue along comes this whippersnapper Minister, acting on behalf of Lord Young—who has previously had a row with the right hon. Member for Chingford—and wanting to settle the argument. He gives in and acknowledges that there is a prospect of getting some deal through. To appease the right hon. Member for Chingford, he says, "Here is £800 million of taxpayers' money. If you give us £150 million back, that will be all right. It will cloud the issue. By the way, we are writing off another £1,100 million."

All in all, the right hon. Member for Chingford did not do badly for his friends at BAe. In my opinion, there ought to be a public inquiry into the affair.

Mr. Clarke: I came to the House at the same time as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and I think that my age and political experience are about the same as his. Speaking as one whippersnapper to another, let me tell him that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is a considerable expert on the aerospace industry, which is no doubt why he gives unpaid advice to the chairman of BAe.

If the hon. Gentleman reflects on what I have said, I trust that he will be persuaded of the wisdom of the deal. His intervention did not reveal what he is aiming at by seeking to undermine it. If he is saying that it is too generous to British Aerospace, is he seeking to undermine the position of the business as it proceeds? If he is saying that it stinks, he will have to give a slightly less tortuous

explanation the next time that he goes through the deal, and try to explain where he thinks that any money that is changing hands is first not properly accounted for, and second is not passed for the purpose of sustaining the industry on a fair basis for the future. The fact is that the hon. Gentleman's advice on aeroplanes, paid or unpaid, is of even less use than his advice on the coal industry, although he has slightly more knowledge of that industry.

Mr. Skinner: I do not muddle up the taxpayers' money.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman frequently muddles up the taxpayers' money in his own mind. I trust that he is not about to suggest that my right hon. Friend or anyone else has muddled up the taxpayers' money in this particular case. I have given the most detailed exposition of it to the hon. Member for Dagenham who understands these matters rather better than the hon. Member for Bolsover does, and does not resort to vague, unsubstantiated smears which the hon. Member does not understand when he repeats them.

If we can get back to the serious business in hand, I ask the more responsible hon. Members to consider exactly what, from the point of view of the British motor industry, British Aerospace or anyone else, they are driving at when they seek to criticise the deal and to suggest that we have arrived at our conclusion after anything other than a sensible appraisal of the need to get rid of past debts and to put the company on a sensible footing for the future.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): The Minister referred to experience in industry. Could he tell me of any experience that he has had in any industry?

Mr. Clarke: I have never worked in industry. I was talking about the experience of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford in the aerospace industry. However I have considerable experience of privatising industry, I am glad to say, and experience of facing criticism from Opposition Members. As this privatisation goes through they will find that their criticisms are ill-founded.

I have described the deal, I believe that it is sustainable and I trust that the Commission will approve it with expedition. Completion of the agreement between British Aerospace and the Government announced on 29 March is of course subject to the approval of British Aerospace shareholders and completion of the European Community procedures. The Government firmly believe that the best interests of the business will be served by speedy implementation of the deal that we have negotiated. The company needs to be removed at long last from the spotlight of political debate and the political battlefield, and should be allowed to get on with the business of making and selling passenger vehicles.

I believe that that view is shared by the vast majority of Rover Group employees who are delighted to see the company passing out of the political arena at last. I certainly believe that that view is shared by all the suppliers who make a vital contribution to the United Kingdom economy, particularly in the west midlands, and all those whose livelihoods are dependent on the distribution chain.

I am very conscious—as no doubt are many hon. Members from constituency correspondence—of the support of the 1,000-strong Austin Rover dealer network for the deal that the Government are proposing. My right hon. and noble Friend has also discussed the deal with Honda whose operational partnership with the Rover Group has already generated the flagship Rover 800 range and is being taken forward with a new mid-range model. The Government were particularly mindful of the importance that Honda placed on the continuity of the Rover Group management. Honda was reassured by British Aerospace's ownership of the company. The Government very much welcome the prospect that the relationship with Honda should continue to develop satisfactorily on the basis that we are proposing.

I gave a list of the people who have broadly welcomed the deal. I believe that the only basis on which any hon. Member can be opposed to the deal is on some continuing doctrinaire commitment to nationalisation of this car company. The Labour party has never extended its desire for nationalisation to the whole of the vehicle industry. Fortunately, the Labour party has never yet threatened to nationalise Ford or Nissan in this country—although it has devised other means of driving away investment in Dundee, but that is not relevant to this debate. The Labour party appears to retain a lasting yearning to intervene in the management of what was British Leyland.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I cannot give way; I must conclude.

In this short debate I have described the terms again. There is nothing new to be said about them. I do not think that much can be said by either side. One thing that can be resolved today and would be of wider interest outside is whether the Labour party's attitude has in some way changed towards the public ownership of the Rover Group. I have the pleasure of being shadowed by the great revisionist in the Labour party. I hope that he will not avoid the only interesting topic of this debate: is the Labour party still committed to nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy? I hope that the hon. Member for Dagenham will not avoid the question as he did last time by arguing the industrial logic of the proposal. If people are interested in logic I ask them to choose between the judgment of Professor Roland Smith, Sir Raymond Lygo, Graham Day and the management of both these great companies and that of Labour politicians.

Has the Labour party yet acquired the courage to abandon the idea of state-owned manufacturing? If it has, now is the time to declare it. If it has decided to abandon the principle of nationalised manufacturing I hope that Opposition Members will give backing to a deal which is extremely good for the taxpayer, the company, the company's employees, the company's dealers and for everyone who wishes a good future for those dependent on the Rover Group.

7.46 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Opposition Members recognise that what is at stake in the issues that we are debating this evening is the survival of an indigenous British volume car manufacturer—indeed, the last indigenous volume car manufacturer.

We believe that the car industry is of great importance to our economy in terms of employment, overseas earnings, wealth creation and the whole hinterland of economic activity that depends on it. That is true not only of our economy but of all major advanced economies which have at the heart of their industrial capacity a powerful and successful car industry. It is significant—and perhaps in microcosm an indication of our industrial

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

decline—that we are at the bottom of the list of the G7 countries in terms of car manufacture. The Minister looks somewhat puzzled. I can assure him that we have now been overtaken by Spain, which is not a G7 country.

For all those reasons, we are concerned to preserve an expanding and prosperous car industry. We approach the matter with great seriousness and a sense of responsibility. We are not going to make cheap party points from the Dispatch Box or engage in debates about various forms of ownership, although I shall attempt to answer some of the Minister's questions. We do not want by any statement, doubt or point that we make this evening to jeopardise what we believe is the very fragile future of the industry.

Given that that is our basic purpose, we are entitled to express to the Government our grave disquiet. I shall try to explain in detail our grave disquiet—which is not unknown to Conservative Members—at what the deal will mean for the future of the indigenous British volume car industry five years down the road.

The Minister asked me about our view of the industry and what we think should happen to it. Our view is quite clear. We believe that the stability that the Minister emphasised, which I agree is extremely important, would best be achieved by the present ownership of that industry. I shall be quite categorical. We believe that the onus is on the Minister and the Government to explain how the deal will improve the industry's prospects. I propose to give him some reasons for thinking that the deal will worsen those prospects. I have yet to begin to develop that argument, but I gladly give way.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman acts on the reasonable expectation that the deal will go ahead and that the company will be transferred to British Aerospace, would it be the intention of a future Labour Government to renationalise the Rover Group?

Mr. Gould: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has pointed to two major obstacles over which the deal has yet to climb—the EEC and British Aerospace shareholders. Therefore, we have yet to see whether the deal takes place. My purpose is to show that, far from the argument that the Chancellor advanced—that there is no alternative—there is indeed an alternative. That alternative is to maintain the status quo. Indeed, I would go further.

If we are really concerned about the future of the Rover Group and volume car manufacturing in this country under British ownership and control—this is in support of the point made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—we need the commitment of an owner who is willing to make the long-term investment that is required. We need an appreciation by the owner of the long-term importance of the industry to the British economy. We need pride of ownership. Those things have been missing in the hands of the Government, who have made it clear that all they are concerned about is getting shot of the industry as quickly as possible and on whatever terms they can scrabble together. That is an indictment of what the Government have done. We believe that the alternative that I have mentioned should have been opted for. The commitment of the present owner would guarantee the future of the industry.

What is missing from the Government's recent record as the owner of Rover and from the deal they now propose in order to get rid of Rover is a sense of strategy, a sense of the importance of the industry and a sense of determination to maintain the industry in at least its present form or, preferably, in an expanded form. That is missing from the analysis offered by the Chancellor. In the absence of a strategy, we are offered the dogma of privatisation. That simply will not do. It is not good enough.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): We have heard all this before. Here we go again. The last strategy the company had under a Labour Government was called the Ryder plan. That ended in the most appalling mess, from which it took years for the company to recover. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we want a Ryder plan mark II, because that is what strategies mean?

Mr. Gould: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman thinks that he has heard our arguments before, because, with luck, the message may be getting through. I am suggesting that we need a strategy based on a commitment to make the necessary investment. For reasons which I shall elaborate, I do not believe that the present deal offers that commitment or a prospect of investment.

As I have said, we have the dogma of privatisation, which means that a buyer has to be found. There has to be a buyer on any terms. The Government have nailed their colours to the mast and made their intentions clear. Therefore, somewhere, a buyer has to be found. The Government know already that for political reasons that buyer has to be British, and along comes British Aerospace. It is certainly British and it is welcome on that account. We certainly do not cavil at the prospect of a British owner if we believe that the other criteria are met. However, the questions and doubts that arise must be settled. Nothing that has been said this evening has settled those doubts or gone any way towards doing so.

The first doubt that will occur to anybody can be summed up in what a trade unionist working at the Longbridge plant said to me yesterday. He said, "What does British Aerospace know about making cars?" That is a simple question, but it is at the heart of the argument. Put in a different way——

Mr. Roger King: What do the Government know about making cars?

Mr. Gould: The Government have installed the present management and provided, at least until now, the investment required. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) will contain himself for a moment, he will discover that it is on that question that I believe British Aerospace will prove deficient.

The question, "What does British Aerospace know about making cars?", is the same question as that on which the Chancellor poured scorn a moment ago. It is the same as asking, "Where is the industrial logic?" That is the way the leader writers tend to put it, but it is the same question. How can it make sense to put those two companies together? It certainly looks good on a balance sheet. The assets mount encouragingly, employment looks rather better, and so on. But not a whit of strength has been added to Rover as a car manufacturer or to British Aerospace as a plane maker. All that has happened is that the two balance sheets have been put together. The truth is that building cars on a production line is different from

the work patterns, production runs and scheduling required for manufacturing specialised products such as aircraft.

We have heard much talk about synergy. It is a wonderful word. It is likely to dazzle some of those who do not bother to look behind it. Synergy has been rejected as an argument in favour of the deal by all those whom the Chancellor failed to mention. All the experts, commentators, academics and those who know about the industry are agreed that there is virtually nothing in the synergy argument. Of course, at the margins, if one puts two engineering companies together, however disparate, one might find some slight benefits here and there.

However, I suspect that those who talk so glibly about synergy have been dazzled by the glossy television adverts by Saab. Those advertisements are very much in the tradition of the current Department of Trade and Industry, so it is no wonder that people are susceptible to them. Those advertisements have made great play of the idea of synergy. However, if one asks Saab what has been the reality of its experience, it will say that it has proved to be of little value. What little value it has experienced has been produced over 40 years or more. It has had remarkably little impact on its overall operation. Indeed, its connection with Scania, the truck maker, has been of much greater importance than its role as an aircraft manufacturer. When one looks at all the other supposed synergistic liaisons between car makers and plane makers, one discovers that in almost every case the object of the acquisition—usually made by the car maker, not the aircraft manufacturer—has been diversification, not synergy. Let us set aside synergy, which is just a nice word that is sometimes used to impress Chancellors of the Duchy of Lancaster.

It is sometimes said—indeed Professor Roland Smith has said this—that British Aerospace has expertise in marketing around the world which will be of great value to Rover. I wonder whether the dealers whom the Chancellor prayed in aid will be impressed by the odd foray that British Aerospace makes to far flung corners of the world where it enters into long drawn out negotiations for the sale of two or three specialised products, dealing with Governments and, often, military regimes. I do not believe that those dealers will think that that sort of experience and expertise will help to develop mass markets for standardised products or help to maintain effective dealer networks in Britain and around the world. That is a very different experience. I do not believe that any serious person, looking at the two operations, can truly expect that marketing will be one of the great strengths that British Aerospace will bring to the Rover Group.

It gives me no pleasure to say what I have to say, but I believe that we have to point it out in view of the glowing picture developed by the Chancellor. If British Aerospace is deficient in experience and expertise, what about the crucial commitment that it is likely to make to the long-term investment, without which Rover cannot develop the new model ranges that are required if it is to stay in business? Where is that commitment to come from? It cannot come from Rover itself.

Let me pay a tribute to Rover, not so much to Mr. Graham Day—he simply produced his figures by going for margins rather than market share—but to the work force. The work force deserves a great deal of credit for the improvement in the Rover Group's performance. The problem is that, even with its present performance—its brief surge into profitability—Rover, with 15 per cent. of a market that some believe may be close to its peak, cannot generate for itself the investment that it needs. It is too small. Almost all commentators accept that, if Rover is to stay in business as a volume car manufacturer, it needs the support of a larger, preferably car manufacturing, firm.

Mr. Roger King: A few moments ago the hon. Gentleman mentioned that he had been to Longbridge, or spoken to someone there. Had he visited and examined the plant, he would have seen the enormous amount of investment going into it, with new factories being converted to the latest high technology equipment and new engine plants coming on stream in preparation for a new car. There is no shortage of investment. The company is generating investment from its present business.

Mr. Gould: For once I am delighted to have given way to the hon. Gentleman, as he made the point that I was about to develop. Of course, he is right. Great investment has taken place in Rover, but under whose auspices? Where has the money come from? It has been generated not by Rover sales and profits, but by the willingness of the present owners to invest. In other words, the taxpayer has made the investment, and it has been valuable and important.

How is this investment to be sustained? Not from the resources of Rover cast adrift by the taxpayer. Rover will not make the investment. Some other source must be found, not from the taxpayer but from somewhere else. That means that we must turn to British Aerospace. Unless the investment is made and products such as the Metro—the most outdated small car model on sale anywhere in the world—are moved out of the way and replaced by new models—I concede that some are in the pipeline—Rover's future is bleak.

Of course, it is true, as the hon. Member for Northfield pointed out—and this is the case for public ownership—that the investment has largely been made in the K series engine and the R8 and R6 models. However, it is also true that the launch costs for those models have yet to be found. New investment will be required if the R8 is not to be—as I fear it may well be—the last car produced in Britain that can properly be regarded as a British car. If we are to avoid that outcome—it is an evident danger staring us in the face—capital must be produced and invested.

We look in vain for such a commitment from British Aerospace. British Aerospace is not in a shape to generate the sort of investment resources that will be required. It is on record as saying that at an exchange rate of more than $1·70 it cannot remain profitable. We know what the Prime Minister thinks of that sort of special pleading from industrialists. How dismissive and contemptuous she is of those who must operate in the real economy. But British Aerospace is in difficulties with the present exchange rate. It is making a huge loss on Airbus. It cannot easily sell civil aircraft at a profit with the exchange rate above $1·70. So British Aerospace is not now or in the foreseeable future likely to generate the cash that it needs to make this investment.

It is worth remembering that British Aerospace was itself the prospective victim of a takeover bid not so long ago. There may well be clever men in the City on the board of British Aerospace who reckon that, to ward off another

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takeover bid, it might not be a bad idea to surround themselves with the protection of Rover Group, which might deter possible predators.

Far from British Aerospace being a source of investment capital, we believe there are real reasons for fearing that its attitude to Rover will be the reverse—that it intends to take money out. That is what the company did when it acquired the royal ordnance factories last year—profitable factories that helped to keep British Aerospace in profit. That was a good move. Perhaps for the time being, or even for five years—there may be real significance in that period—the calculation is that British Aerospace can do with Rover what it has been doing with the royal ordnance factories.

Far from being anxious to invest its non-existent hundreds of millions of pounds in British industry, British Aerospace has been cutting back. It has been reducing its work force, closing down its sites and plants and making it clear that it is likely to move substantial production abroad. Some reports say that £1 billion of Airbus production may well be moved to the United States because of the exchange rate. The Chancellor lauded the prospects of the British components industry. If British Aerospace carries through its plans to move production of Airbus to the United States, I fear that there is a grim message in that for the British components industry. The Rover Group and its predecessors have been faithful customers of the British components industry, on which the livelihoods of so many people who are represented by Conservative Members depend. The message is grim, inspired by the new ruthlessness that British Aerospace is likely to bring to the car industry, as it did to the aircraft manufacturing industry.

The danger is that British Aerospace will look on Rover, for the reasons that the hon. Member for Northfield gave, as a company that has already made a valuable investment. That investment is likely to pay off, at least in cash terms, over the next few years. Little will be required for a period. British Aerospace has orders but no cash, because no one will pay for those aircraft for several years to come, and it desperately needs things to sell. That is why it wanted the royal ordnance factories and why it wants Rover. At least Rover has cars in showrooms which can be sold to bring in some cash.

The danger is not only that British Aerospace might want to regard Rover as a sort of cash cow for a period; it might also intend to treat some of the Rover assets—particularly its sites—in the same way as it did its own. It is significant that British Aerospace tended to close sites in the south and concentrate its operations in the north. It has sold the sites with the greatest development value——

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): That is regional policy.

Mr. Gould: If that is regional policy, we now understand more clearly that it is about destroying jobs and capacity.

If British Aerospace seriously tackles the task of making volume cars, the one site that looks at risk is the Cowley south site, which happens to be of great potential development value. It is perhaps not an accident that British Aerospace, like so much of the rest of British industry, has found property development rather more to its liking than manufacturing the basic industrial products that brought it into existence. It is no accident that British Aerospace has had a profitable series of joint ventures with Trafalgar House, the property developer, which will have an eye on some of these sites.

The Chancellor fairly conceded that the relationship with Honda was of great importance to the future of Rover. The need for that relationship is unaffected by the link with British Aerospace. The Chancellor's agreement to that suggests the very point that I am making—that the link with British Aerospace does nothing to strengthen Rover as a car manufacturer. It still depends on the link with Honda. If, for any reason, Honda withdrew, British Aerospace would not have the expertise to make good that loss. Honda's attitude is of great importance.

The Chancellor has from time to time given slightly differing accounts of when Honda was first told about this deal, how closely it was consulted and what its current attitude is. He has revealed that the Secretary of State has been to Japan and talked to Honda. He brought back some general encouraging noises, but we have had little by way of assurance or detail. I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will remedy those omissions later this evening. We want to know more about what Honda has said, what intentions it has expressed, what assurances it has given and what its attitude to the change is. As the Chancellor rightly said, the one thing that Honda will want is stability of ownership and management. That is another powerful argument for maintaining the status quo of public ownership.

So much for what the deal offers to Rover. I wish that I could say that it offers a rosy future, but that cannot be said. What about British Aerospace? It is not in the healthiest of conditions. It has been made extremely unprofitable for the time being by the rise in the exchange rate. Its proposed link with Rover has already been criticised in today's newspapers by one of its potential European partners, Aerospatiale. The French have warned—I take no responsibility for the statement but simply report it to the House—that this sort of distraction may prove an obstacle to British Aerospace in developing the sort of European co-operation as aeroplane makers that is so essential if we are to withstand competition.

Of course, the deal offers British Aerospace total assets which will put it ahead of Lockheed, so it looks the part—it looks like a major industrial company. As I have argued already, as neither Rover nor British Aerospace is strengthened by the deal—indeed, they are conceivably weakened—looking the part will not be good enough. There is a great danger, as surely everyone must concede, that British Aerospace will get into the age old practice of cross-subsidisation. That has bedevilled the British car industry, especially British Motor Holdings and British Leyland, over a long period. The problems of British Motor Holdings dragged down Leyland Motors. We have seen it all before. There must be a fear that it will happen once again.

Rover, too, although briefly in profit, will be affected by rising exchange rates. It is not immune from the market. It will find difficulty in maintaining its sales and holding on to its market share, or at least holding on to its market share and to margins, with an exchange rate which is soaring against European currencies. The prospects of Rover staying in profit for more than three, four or five years without the investment that is required are grim. That is why we come to the detail of the deal and the financial arrangements that have been made.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster can argue for as long as he wishes about what this or that sum represents, but the truth is that, to persuade British Aerospace—and if all other bidders were discouraged—to take Rover off their hands, the Government were prepared to pay £650 million. The sum of £800 million of taxpayers' money—a cash injection, as the Minister so charmingly put it—was handed over to British Aerospace. The reason was that, unless Professor Roland Smith could be guaranteed by that sum that he would not lose in the next three or four years, he would not be able to sell the deal to his shareholders. Even as things stand, he may have great difficulty in convincing them that this is a wise move.

If Professor Roland Smith has insisted on this £800 million cash injection as the price of his doing a deal and if it is calculated—as I understand the Minister has done—that that will see the deal through the first five years, the logic of that approach is extremely worrying to those who believe that the deal guarantees any sort of future to Rover. Clearly, after five years, when the cash has run out, without the investment having been made, it is all too obvious what will happen to the bits of Rover that British Aerospace no longer wants. The Government know that and simply could not care less.

That is why it is important we should know what the EEC is likely to say. If the Minister's view is right and the EEC can be persuaded that this £800 million is entirely to do with writing off debts and so on, however calculated, Professor Roland Smith has an outside chance, according to his calculations, of selling the deal to his shareholders. But the EEC may unpick the deal and not accept all that the Minister has said. The EEC may say, "Just a moment. Rover's known borrowings amount to about £560 million. Even if you wanted to cover them—current borrowings as opposed to writing off accumulated losses—what is that extra £240 million for?" If the EEC decides that that is not a cash injection but a cash handout to sweeten the deal to make it possible, the deal starts to look not only in jeopardy from the Commission's view but a good deal less attractive to British Aerospace shareholders.

That is why, without any wish to jeopardise the deal, we need to know what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster thinks the chances are. We know the arguments that he will advance, but there is some evidence that the Commission in Brussels is unlikely to accept them. If the arguments are not accepted and £240 million, or perhaps some smaller sum, is removed from the £800 million, the question arises as to whether the deal looks sufficiently attractive to be able to sell it to British Aerospace shareholders, given that the Government have already committed the shareholders and themselves to a five-year guarantee—as I understand it, a legally binding guarantee in contract—that no disposal of any substantial part of Rover will be made over that period. We need to know what is likely to happen, because it is crucial.

We have not approached the debate in the sense of trying to destroy what the Government think they have achieved. We should like to see—indeed, we are desperate to see—a viable and prosperous future for the industry. We have felt contrained to argue that the deal does not guarantee that future. There are reasons for fearing that the future as a consequence of the deal is extremely truncated. We do not believe that the Government have had adequate assurances or guarantees. We do not believe that the Government have thought for a moment about what they will do if the EEC, some other agency or British Aerospace shareholders at some point say that the deal is not to go through. What then is the Government's position? They have ruled out other bidders. Indeed, they say that there are no other bidders. They have committed themselves, for political and ideological reasons, to private ownership as opposed to maintaining public ownership. It is the Government who have decided to play politics with this industry and those who work in it. We are fearful for the industry's future and we hold the Government responsible for whatever happens.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that time is limited and that many hon. Members wish to speak.

8.17 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I congratulate him on his guarded comments, and we shall study with great interest what he said. One thing which has come across loud and clear is that he is a gentleman of very little faith. Conservative Members have great faith in what this merger will bring to the last remnant of the British motor industry.

The hon. Member for Dagenham said that he would like to see a plan and strategy for the development of the Rover Group. We have had many plans and strategies over the years, going back to the white hot heat of technology during the 1960s. We have brought together all the last outposts of the British motor industry in one great unit in an attempt to take on the world competition and breathe more life into the industry. We have seen progressively over the past 15 or 20 years that that has counted for little. New leaders of the industry have come and gone and strategies and plans have been cast to the wind as they have all been seen to have failed. I do not think that we need a plan concocted by Whitehall or by any political party. We need good, sound, solid management with the resources capable of continuing the progress on which this country has already embarked.

We have been asked, what do British Aerospace know about making cars? It is not necessary for everyone to know the detailed work of making cars, any more than it is necessary for many companies to say that they know exactly what they are involved with. Vickers, which is a very successful company, manufactures Rolls-Royce cars. One would think that Vickers would not know much about making photographic plates, yet it makes them very successfully. One would think that Vickers would not know very much about pharmaceutical equipment, yet it manufactures pharmaceutical equipment of a high quality and is very successful in the market. It is possible for companies such as Vickers to run other companies successfully because they know about delegating management on the spot, not management in Whitehall being dictated by a political party. Management is left to get on with the job.

Sir Michael Edwardes, who was chairman of BL Cars, and Graham Day, who is chairman of the Rover Group, exercised responsibility and told the management to control and develop on their own as far as they could, and they were successful in so doing.

In some ways, I am sad that we are debating the future of the Rover Group. Once again, its employees see that

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their future is being debated in Parliament. Over the years we have had more debates about the future of this part of the motor industry than about any other part of British industry.

The last thing that we should be doing tonight is debating the future of the Rover Group because talks between the Rover Group, British Aerospace and the EEC are at a delicate stage. It would be better for the House to say nothing, to allow the negotiations to continue and then to debate the issues once we knew what decisions had been made.

Mr. Nellist: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a merger between GEC and Plessey could this week result in the loss of 4,000 jobs in Coventry, South-East? Arnold Weinstock, who is the managing director of GEC, has not come to the House with a Bill to sack those workers. There has been no debate in the House about that matter. Should not the future of hundreds of thousands of car workers in the west midlands, who rely on the publicly owned Rover Group for their jobs, be debated in the House? What is this place for if it is not to debate the jobs and future of workers in the car industry?

Mr. King: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises that there are hundreds of thousands of workers in the industry. He describes the car industry as though nobody works in it and it is an industrial desert. I cannot comment on the talks between GEC and Plessey.

We have debated the future of the Rover Group on many occasions. Negotiations about the Rover Group are at a delicate stage, and we should allow them to be completed before debating the matter in detail. We are talking about a merger that will not result in a loss of jobs or a cutback in production but will bring much benefit to the Rover Group and British Aerospace. A formidable industrial combine will be created that will be able to take on the rest of the world.

The Labour party's message is that it loathes privatisation, particularly this deal. Some people in the EEC may be encouraged by Labour Members' words. They may say, "If the British Parliament is not speaking with one voice, perhaps we should consider the deal closely." Obviously there are parts of the deal that those people can latch on to and criticise us about. If the Commission gets tough and demands substantial changes that are unacceptable to British Aerospace, where will that leave the Rover Group? We know that the Labour party would like it to remain a nationalised company, but that is clearly a non-starter. We have seen in Socialist France and almost every developed western country that Government's role is to get out of manufacturing and to get its sticky fingers out of matters that are best done in the private sector.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Tell that to Renault.

Mr. King: The French Government intend to privatise Renault, and they should be congratulated on that. Why is it good for the Socialist Government of France to privatise Renault but wrong for our Government to privatise the Rover Group?

The consequence of a breakdown in negotiations for Rover dealers could be quite substantial. Every time that we debate the future of the Rover Group in the House there is a registered downturn in its market the following month. Confidence in the company must be built up, and it has developed strongly not only in this country but in Europe and the rest of the world. The fact that every month or so we debate the Rover Group deters customers from buying its products.

My constituents have worked hard to achieve success for the Rover Group. Its model range is good and is well received in export markets. The Government have patiently nursed the Rover Group through an enormous setback in the market place and back to considerable health.

The merger with British Aerospace represents an exciting way forward. The realistic terms that have been negotiated—I admit that large sums of taxpayers' money have been written off—merely confirm the reality of the company's position. There is no question of us ever seeing that money return, at least in the short term, although as the company's profits increase the taxpayer will receive his fair share. The large sums that were written off had been invested to ensure that the Rover Group remained a major car manufacturing company. The Rover Group has been essential to the west midlands economy and the plethora of component manufacturing industries that follow in its trail.

The debate is timely because it gives us an opportunity to remind the country just how far the company has come. The Rover Group has a future only because the Government have remained steadfast and resolute and dragged its affairs successfully into a demanding and challenging world. It is ably led by managers of a high quality and calibre.

The Labour party has much to answer for, given its track record in the motor industry. I mentioned what happened in the 1960s when the Government of Lord Wilson helped to create the British Motor Holdings group. In those days the company had 48 factories and employed 190,000 people. Each employee produced only 5·6 cars per year; its productivity record was not good. Harold Wilson knew the reality of the matter and when BMC shop stewards descended on the 1966 Labour party conference to protest about redundancies he was asked whether a deputation of six of them could address him at his Brighton hotel. He agreed and 12 of them entered the hotel. Harold Wilson said, "That is what is wrong with the British motor industry—it always needs 12 men to do what six could do."

The industry was faced with the challenge of dragging itself into the latter part of the 20th century and to match Japanese and European competition. The conflict between management and employees was never ending. In 1969-70, 5 million man hours were lost through disputes. In 1971-72, the figure was 10 million; the year after that it was 7·4 million; and in 1973-74 it was 9·6 million. That continued until the Conservative Government took office and brought some law and order to industrial relations, which was the catalyst necessary to maintain the viability of much of our industry, particularly the British motor industry. It heralded the end of Red Robbo and his sort, who used to call out the work force at the drop of a hat, thus disrupting production and sales throughout the world.

No Labour Government could tackle overmanning and poor productivity, preside over closures, rationalisation and redundancies because their paymasters would never

allow it. The survival of British Leyland depended on unpalatable decisions being taken. If we were to maintain a British car industry, those choices had to be made. The Conservative Government, using the support and skills of Sir Michael Edwardes, ensured that a large portion of the British motor industry survived. The choices were painful and tragic for those who were affected. Labour relations were tackled and the troublemakers finally cast to the wind.

Despite these great changes, the company still had a long way to go, and losses were still being incurred. Rumours abounded that the Government were anxious to ensure a sell-off, but, despite the discussions taking place, the business remained substantially intact until Graham Day took over in 1986. His policy of business disposal has been absolutely right. Jaguar had shown the way in 1984—and what an outstanding success that company has been. It is employing more people than ever before, for higher wages, and turning out more products, bringing wealth to Coventry, to the country and to the people who are employed in that business—an outstanding achievement.

Mr. Nellist: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, towards the end of last year, in a six-week period, 17 shop floor workers at Jaguar died from stress-related diseases, including strokes, and since then the company has demanded an extra 92 cars per week off the track? Is that the benchmark of the hon. Gentleman's productivity?

Mr. King: The facts speak for themselves. If they are to survive, the productivity and performance of companies must be of a high standard. The output of Jaguar is still nowhere near the level of some of the European factories, which seem to manage perfectly well. I cannot comment on the physical standards of shop stewards and employees. However, the regular hours that they have been putting in and the good money that they have been earning has been reflected by a substantial upturn in the economy of the west midlands.

The Rover Group has been successful in privatising Unipart, Leyland Bus, Leyland Trucks and Freight Rover, Istel and smaller component businesses, and all are doing well. That is why I welcome the British Aerospace-Rover proposals. Along with my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller), I expressed reservations initially about the early proposals, and asked whether there were any alternatives. Along with my hon. Friend, I went to see Graham Day. After our private talks with him, we were optimistic about the outcome and sure about the future of the business.

Rover and British Aerospace will be a formidable partnership. The merger is popular with the work force, just as the merger between Freight Rover and DAF was. When that announcement was made, Freight Rover workers were pleasantly surprised about their future, going into the Leyland-DAF combine, and the evidence shows that they were right. The factory is engaged in substantial expansion and there is talk of the work force being doubled in size. We look forward to that successful expansion.

The Rover-British Aerospace deal takes away the immediate worry of who will own what, and leaves everyone to get on with what they do best—building good quality vehicles. Labour Members would not prattle on about investment and the future so much if they could see the enormous investment taking place in the company with new engines, gearboxes and cars produced to the highest technology and by a skilled work force, determined to give themselves and their families a secure future. These investments are taking place under the financial regime of the business. It has not used Government money for the past four years. It is financing its own investment from its own earnings. It is cautious about its investment programme—as it is about all that it is achieving—which was set out by the Rover Group board and approved by the Government as part of the corporate plan. It is sustainable and it means that the Rover Group can maintain its viability as a separate car company, although it will be better off under the wing of British Aerospace.

Throughout the region car workers can take out mortgages and other such commitments because their income will be on a regular day-to-day basis. Productivity and quality are setting new standards and are nearly equal to those of the best of our competitors. Much of that has been learnt by the company in its dealings with Honda. Honda has taught the business to produce cars of a high quality, and that is reflected in many of its products. In a recent back-to-back test conducted for the April edition of *Company Car*, which is available in the Library, four popular fleet cars were tested—the Montego, the Sierra Sapphire, the Cavalier and the Peugeot 405, which is made in Coventry and is an outstanding vehicle. This was the conclusion:

"in overall assessment there is no escaping the conclusion that the Montego offers more than its rivals. It is not quite as fast as the Peugeot 405 manages to be, but it is more economical, offers much better accommodation . . . and is generally better equipped. As to the Cavalier and Sierra, they are both excellent fleet cars, but I find no grounds for changing the conclusion reached last year, that they are both beaten by the Montego. The Peugeot seems to drop neatly into second place".

The company is making outstanding products and will go on doing so as new products come forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), who by convention cannot speak in this debate, has been a staunch supporter of Land Rover and has played a leading part in ensuring the continuing viability of that company. What an outstanding future it will have under British Aerospace, as British Aerospace's military contacts throughout the world open new opportunities for the sale of Land Rover's military derived vehicles. That is an exciting prospect, and I know that my hon. Friend looks forward to the benefits of this merger for his constituents.

There is no doubt that all those connected with Rover, especially in the component industry, owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Government. With its new products, its dedicated work force and its new partner of British Aerospace, the future looks bright. Let us send out a clear signal to the European Commission tonight. It should not stand in the way of this deal, but should let it go through intact, as we have proposed, and it will play a substantial part in the continuing revitalisation of our industrial capacity and the resuscitation of our car industry.

8.36 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I want the Rover Group to succeed, not least because thousands of my constituents depend on the Rover Group for their jobs and wages, but the Government's sale, or gift, of the Rover Group to British Aerospace is a bad deal for the taxpayer, for the people who work for the Rover Group and for the

[Mr. Terry Davis]

thousands of people who work for dealers and components manufacturers in the west midlands and elsewhere, and who depend on the success of the Rover Group for their future livelihood.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) missed the crucial point, which is not that British Aerospace knows nothing about making cars but that it knows nothing about selling cars. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman made hardly any reference to the sales and marketing problems of the Rover Group. He talked at length about the production of cars but he said nothing about selling cars. The biggest weakness of British Leyland, then Leyland Cars and now the Rover Group, has always been its sales and marketing department. Its biggest problem has always been its inability to design and sell cars.

That is the first criticism—that the deal will put the Rover Group under the control of a company that is in a different market. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) explained, people who sell planes are selling to a few customers with high-value orders with a great deal of Government involvement—the sales may even be made to Governments. People selling cars are selling them through dealers and retailers to individual customers and to the fleet market which is still a relatively large number of customers compared with the people buying planes. The markets are different, and that is why this is a bad arrangement.

The second problem is that of finance for investment in the future. A year ago, British Aerospace needed the Government to help it with money to finance its contribution to the Airbus project. To his shame, the Minister suggested that Labour critics of this deal were saying that the Government should not have helped British Aerospace with the Airbus project. He should know that that is not true. My hon. Friends and I were constantly pressing the Government to help British Aerospace by making available the money for our contribution to the Airbus project, as other Governments are doing for their companies. We did not criticise that. The Minister has deliberately missed the point, which is that if British Aerospace needed Government help for that contribution, how can it finance future model development at the Rover Group? Indeed, how can it finance the acquisition of the Rover Group? The answer is that it is not buying the Rover Group because the company is not being sold—it is being given to British Aerospace. That is the truth behind the arrangements that the Government have concluded with British Aerospace.

This is not a good deal for the taxpayer who has invested in the Rover Group over the years and is now beginning to see a return on that investment. The future profits of the Rover Group will go not to the taxpayer but to British Aerospace.

British Aerospace has an immediate cash flow problem over the next few years before the sales of planes generate the money that it needs. British Aerospace needs the Rover Group as it needed Royal Ordnance to provide the money for its day-to-day cash needs for the next few years. That is what the deal is about.

What will happen after those five years—after BAe has achieved that short-term cash flow—to the investment that needs to take place in new models at Longbridge and elsewhere? We fear that the answer is that British Aerospace will not be able to afford investment for future new models. The cash cow will dry up and then British Aerospace will want to close down plants and dispose of assets. In fact, British Aerospace may not even wait five years; it has a record of closing down factories—not only its own factory at Weybridge but the Royal Ordnance factory at Enfield. The policy of British Aerospace is to generate cash by capital receipts as a result of closing factories and selling prime sites.

Not only Cowley will be at risk. Cowley and Longbridge are not the only factories in the Rover Group. Many other smaller sites still operate in Birmingham and the west midlands. It is only a few years since the Solihull factory was closed down, and what happened once can happen again. Other smaller factories may well be closed and sold off to generate cash to tide British Aerospace over its short-term cash problems.

The Minister has not explained, and cannot explain, how the arrangement between British Aerospace and the Rover Group will strengthen Rover as a volume car producer. In the immediate future, Honda will be more important than British Aerospace to the Rover Group. The irony is that if the worst happens, we may find that not only have the Japanese acquired the Rover Group but they have acquired British Aerospace through the back door as well.

The real reason why the Government are so anxious to get rid of the Rover Group is that it is becoming profitable. The hon. Member for Northfield made our case for us when he told us about the investment that had taken place and how, thanks to the hard work of its employees, the Rover Group was beginning to make a profit. That is the point. The Government cannot stand profitable publicly owned industries. That is what it is all about. The Government want to get rid of profitable nationalised industries because they do not fit its dogmatic approach to industry.

The point is not that the companies that have already been privatised are doing well because they have been privatised. They are not doing well because they were sold; they were sold because they were going to do well. It is precisely because companies such as Jaguar and Istel and the others were becoming profitable that they were sold by the Government. Because the Government could not sell Rover Group, they are about to give it away.

The hon. Member for Northfield referred to the 1960s. It is important to emphasise that the Rover Group was not taken into public ownership as a result of a Labour Government's hankering to tinker with manufacturing industry but because the company had failed under private ownership and had become virtually bankrupt after four years of Conservative Government—a point carefully glossed over by Conservative Members. At the end of four years of Conservative Government, the privately owned British Leyland had to be rescued by the Labour Government because the country could not afford to allow it to be closed. Thousands of people depended on what was then British Leyland for their livelihood. Thousands more depended on it for their employment at component manufacturers and hundreds of privately owned dealerships depended on it for employment and profits. That is why we had to take British Leyland into public ownership.

We need a continuing long-term commitment. The Minister was right to say that uncertainty and instability damage our prospects of selling cars. But who created the

uncertainty and the instability? The Government created them by their own 1983 manifesto commitment to sell or get rid of Rover Group. We need a continuing long-term commitment from the present owners—the Government, on behalf of the taxpayers—to the group and an equal commitment from the people who work there.

I thought it very significant that, while the Minister was lavish in his praise for Graham Day and made passing laudatory references to the present management, he could not find it in him to say a word of congratulation or appreciation to those who have worked for the Rover Group not for two years but for 22 years or longer. Virtually the only people left, as most of the newcomers have been sacked, are the hundreds of people who have worked at the Rover Group all their working lives. I should have thought that they deserved some congratulations on their hard work through the bad years as well as the good years to keep the Rover Group going.

The Minister said that the employees were delighted by his arrangement. He said that the majority of those who worked at the Rover Group were delighted by the takeover by British Aerospace. How can he say that? I do not know how he can have reached that conclusion. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no ballot on the proposals and no attempt to take soundings of employees. There was no discussion with the trade unions that represent the work force. The Government did not even adopt the latest Land Rover management technique of using an outside polling organisation to phone employees' ex-directory numbers, intrude on their privacy and seek their opinion. How can the Minister have reached that conclusion? He is making it up, just as he made up most of his comments about the Rover Group.

We need a commitment from the Government to keep the Rover Group in public ownership and an equal commitment, which has been forthcoming over 20 years or more, from the people who work at the Rover Group. If we have that, we shall continue to have success and the taxpayer will then enjoy the profits from the investment that has been made in the past.

8.46 pm

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): My old and valued opponent, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), has been going through the routine again. He gave exactly the same song and dance act on television the night that the Leyland-DAF deal was announced. There were the workers in his constituency being interviewed about what they thought of the deal. They were welcoming it while the hon. Gentleman forecast doom and gloom. He conveniently forgot to mention that while they were on strike the Land Rover workers welcomed the British Aerospace deal. Opposition Members never consult the workers. They blather on about them but they never bother to find out what they think. Instead, they pursue their own ends.

I am not surprised that the Opposition have recoiled from their initial reaction to the announcement of the deal. They had to ask for a debate because they knew they had made a botch of it. Now they have had time to reflect and are beginning to jabber for the first time about the need for stability in the company. Having made a ritual obeisance, they then go all out to destroy its fragility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was right to say that every time we have a debate on the matter a new question mark appears. That is one very good reason for getting into privatisation —to get away from public discussion of the company's affairs, which can be so damaging.

Opposition Members put up a number of Aunt Sallys, which they then proceeded to destroy. They bore no relation to my right hon. and learned Friend's speech. They were imaginings designed to prove the Opposition's case that all would be well if the world could stand still and remained in public ownership. Of course, we have not had the form of that public ownership defined. We do not know whether it is social ownership or a new form of ownership. The revisionist hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was remarkably coy on the subject. No doubt the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) will give us the revealed truth—the tablets of the Old Testament. Perhaps a new testament is being hatched by Opposition Members.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It will be the Book of Revelations when I speak, brother.

Mr. Miller: The hon. Gentleman's only connection with the car industry lies in his christian name.

Let me return to the background. It is important to bear in mind that, thanks to the Government's policies and the philosophy that underlies them, our motor industry is beginning to recover. It is important to recall that production in the United Kingdom is likely to rise this year to 1·25 million vehicles, of which approximately 350,000 will be exports.

Some Opposition Members questioned the increase in our car exports. That increase has been solid, and it has particularly contributed to the recovery of the Rover Group. Of the 1·25 million vehicles produced, the Rover Group accounts for 600,000. Of those 600,000, approximately a third are accounted for by the Metro—the only car produced by the Rover Group that is in the top-selling six or seven vehicles. Therefore, that car is crucial to the 1,000 dealers and many hundreds of suppliers. In that context it is important to mention that there are about 2,000 components suppliers in the United Kingdom motor industry, but only 60 of them have a turnover that exceeds more than £10 million a year. The motor industry is fragmented, but it is important to many hon. Gentlemen and their constituents.

I wish to explore the flexibility that my right hon. and learned Friend announced—I believe for the first time—in the operation of the condition on the disposal of a substantial part of the car-making asset. That flexibility is important, and I welcome what I detect as a forward move on the part of my right hon. and learned Friend. I have always argued, right back to the balmy days recalled so fondly by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill—the days of the Ryder plan and nationalisation—that the Rover Group needed to collaborate with other manufacturers. Indeed, that collaboration already takes place with Honda, Peugeot and Volkswagen. I believe that such co-operation should be extended if we are to manufacture a full model range. I hope that the condition of disposal will not prevent collaboration with another manufacturer, including a possible share particiption.

Once again, the Opposition talk about investment as if mere quantum investment is sufficient to produce the results that we are seeking. I believe that it is easy to place too much reliance on technology and consider it a

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short-cut to quality, productivity, output and, in some cases, a means of bypassing responsibility for labour problems.

I well recall sitting in front of Mr. Toyoda in Toyota city. He said, "Welcome. We are happy to show you around our factory. Let me give you a word of warning, however. You will not find any plant here as advanced as that in Longbridge." My goodness, that was true. Nevertheless, productivity and profitability were much higher in that company. Exactly the same was said to me, in slightly different terms, by the managing director of a Japanese shipyard that I visited. He said, "I believe that your yards have too many computers. You have become too inflexible. You have gone too far down that road when you should have been developing communications with the work force, proper preparation of the work and proper presentation of it to the workers so that they can accomplish their target." We should not be misled by the parrot cries of the Opposition who claim that it is just a question of more and more investment and that only the state can guarantee that investment. All Opposition Members say the same thing.

The Opposition believe that it would be lovely if the world stood still and we could all stay as we were. They are the original Conservatives. They are unable to contemplate change and unwilling to give effect to it.

Let us examine the record of public ownership. I believe that the hon. Member for Hodge Hill was rather selective because he overlooked the role that was played by his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) who, in 1968, put the plan together with Harold Wilson. Public ownership has been no protection against low wages. After nationalisation, the wages of car workers, in comparison with other occupations, dropped from the top of the league to near the bottom. The Opposition do not often think about the customer and nationalisation. It did not protect the customer from poor quality or rising prices. We sat up all night discussing the prices and incomes policy introduced by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). The car makers put up their prices every quarter, and a fat lot of good that was. Nationalisation offered no guarantee to suppliers, designers or dealers of a market of parentage or of supply. Nationalisation was no basis for exports or strategy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield has said, there was no guarantee that the Ryder plan would be fulfilled.

It is for good reason that it has been the policy of the Rover board, as well as of the Government, to return the firm to private ownership. The Labour party always wants to keep its fingers on; it always wants some sort of control. It does not tell us what sort of ownership or what sort of management it has in mind. Would we see a return to the co-operative form of management? Would we go back to the Triumph Motor Cycle company, which was a co-operative venture? Would we see the resurrection of Kirby Engineering—another venture of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield? The Labour party is reluctant to yield control. In some ways it resembles civil servants. As I was a civil servant, I am reluctant to make that comparison. Certainly, the Labour party and civil servants share the same inability to distinguish, on occasion, between capital and revenue.

What I object to most of all is the false distinction that the Opposition continually try to make between capital and labour—between workers and managers—as if everyone was not involved in the success of an enterprise or as if managers do not work. They are myths from Labour's past; they are bogy men paraded in front of us. They are an attempt to frighten the workers into the belief that their futures will be at stake if they are allowed, for once, to acquire a shareholding in their companies. That is what is at issue. The Labour party does not like the idea that workers should have real power of ownership which is not exercised by the Opposition.

The Opposition talk about worker representation on the board. Do we seriously imagine—as my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield has said—that we would have Red Robbo on the board? Would that be in the best interests of the workers, customers or suppliers?

We must conclude that, thanks to the policy followed by the Government, the timing of this deal is right. Our policies have made it possible; our underlying philosophy has made it inevitable. Commercial decisions must be made commercially because that is the only way in which we can match competition.

The Opposition have nothing to offer—neither the old nostrums nor the new panaceas that they carefully left unelaborated. With them, it is jam tomorrow. With the Conservative party, it is power and shares to the workers today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is a very short debate and if every Member who wishes to take part is to have the chance of speaking speeches must be short.

8.59 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I have listened with some disillusionment to the debate. I thought that sterile toing and froing between nationalisation and privatisation had been written into the history books.

The Minister had to start with a sterile description of the benefits of privatisation. I suppose that that would be what the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller) would describe as one of the new panaceas. The examples that the Minister gave showed the turnround which has happened while the company has been publicly owned. That does not mean that privatisations are wrong. It means that the company need not be privatised for there to be a turnround.

Equally, we have heard the Labour party say that the company should remain nationalised. It does not follow that there is a benefit from that. Many of the workers and consumers who obtain their products from the nationalised sector would hardly see that as being the case. Equally, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it. When it is appropriate, the state can help to turn round an industry. Indeed, the Government have been reaping the benefit of their ability to do that. They cannot deny that.

Let me nail my colours firmly to the mast. I believe that it is important to consider the long-term viability of the Rover Group, its engineering integrity, its ability in research and development and, in particular, its ability not just as an assembler—such as Peugeot and Nissan—but as an integrated designer and builder of motor cars from the bottom up throughout the range of cars. It is important,

not only because of the nationalism associated with the motor industry, but because of the jobs and the engineering ability which could be lost. The records show that when we lose that ability and that integrity, they do not come back. We are not looking suddenly to plough back into mainstream motor cycle building. As has been said, we lose it for ever, if we lose it at all.

Any deal that involves the strengthening of the position of the Rover Group, and guarantees that it will remain at its current position or, preferably, move forward, would of course be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, although some hon. Members may be more up front than others. In our hearts, we know that we are debating how to ensure the integrity of the group. The essential question is addressed somewhat inadequately, judging by the way the debate has gone: will the British Aerospace link-up achieve what the Government say it will achieve and Opposition Members say it will not?

The question mark that is hanging over that matter was well stated by the *Financial Times*. That is hardly a Socialist rag, but nor is it just crawling to the Government. It is an independent voice in the business sector, writing largely for business men. It said:

"The basis on which the Government has chosen to negotiate appears more designed to save political face than to protect the taxpayer's interest."

That is what the *Financial Times* describes as the real objection. That is the basis on which the debate is taking place.

The more one learns about the deal, the more remarkable it appears. Consider Lord Bruce-Gardyne, who is hardly a critic of the Government's comments. When the announcement was originally made, Lord Bruce-Gardyne, in another place, called it "Golden giveaway terms." That is not echoed by Government Back-Bench Members on this occasion. That is a comment of a strong supporter of the Government, especially as regards his business and monetarist views of the economy. That rather contrasts with the view of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that it is the deal of the decade for the Government. It is difficult to see that that is the case.

When one looks at Rover's accounts and adds together the net asset value and the giveaway of £800 million—the write-off of large sums of taxpayers' money—it is clear that British Aerospace is getting a bargain. It is being paid to take the company off the Government's hands. That is the truth of the spectacular deal that it has made with the Government. It means that the Government have valued Rover's shares at only 2·7p a shot, whereas the market values the shares at 75p a shot. That is the truth of the Government's best deal of the century.

It may be a good, sensible, realistic bargain, as the Minister described it, to British Aerospace, but it does not look like a bargain to the taxpayers in my constituency. Nor does it appear that it will be much of a bargain to those who already own shares in the Rover Group. If the Government have already put that value on the shares, what value will they put on them when they offer them for sale to potential shareholders?

In *The Times* of 3 March, Professor Smith said:

"We shall strike a very hard bargain on the purchase."

He was clearly signalling that the Government were going to lie back and let him have it without any serious negotiations. There was no possibility of turning down the deal or of considering other offers.

Nevertheless, we are told that the golden giveaway will be of benefit to the country and the Rover Group. There are no hard, economic grounds for the deal, but perhaps the Government took the view that an overall strategic viewpoint would be more beneficial. They do not appear to have put much thought into the matter or to have thought seriously about negotiation or turning down the deal. British Aerospace must have been aware of that and realised that the Government had put themselves into a corner on the very day of the announcement. They could not turn it down after that.

Mr. Hoyle: It was decided at a cocktail party.

Mr. Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman says, it was decided at a cocktail party. Clearly, Lord Young had no thoughts on the matter until it was presented to him. At the press conference where Rover announced its 1987 results, he said:

"I have literally an open mind on it . . . I will wait for Mr. Day to tell me even whether privatisation is feasible. I have no thoughts of my own on the subject at the moment."

That hardly suggests that the Government were considering in detail the advantages and disadvantages of the company moving into the private sector, or the deal that they wanted.

If that is how much the Government were putting into consideration of the strategic overview, it is just as well that they are giving the company away on golden giveaway terms. At least a group of people in the private sector might be prepared to consider the strategic implications for the company and to look ahead and to sell the company, rather than, as the Government have tended to do, undermine it on every possible occasion.

The Government have shown an ideological commitment to the private sector as poor as any that has been heard from the Labour party in favour of the nationalised sector. They have paid no attention to the fact that companies in both the private and state sectors go up and down. The basis of the Government's privatisation successes has been laid down in the public sector when those companies have been properly managed.

The Government must respond to a number of important questions. What do they believe will happen with the EC? What indications have they of the EC's view on the matter? The EC is taking an increasingly tough line on such Government giveaways. Indeed, it forced a reduction in the terms of the Leyland-DAF deal. The EC has accepted an agreement between Renault and the French Government, but that involved no new money, only enough to restore the company to net worth zero. I cannot believe that the EC will take as lightly as Government Back Benchers the idea that £800 million is not a giveaway.

More important, what guarantees have the Government extracted in those detailed and difficult negotiations about British Aerospace's future investment plans for the Rover Group? We are told that BAe sells the deal to its shareholders on the basis that everything will be generated within Rover and that nothing will come out of BAe. That does not suggest that there will be any guarantees for the company if it is hit by hard times. What guarantees have the Government won for the future of an integrated business? Will the engineering status of the company be maintained in terms of engines and model

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range? Have the Government won guarantees on research and development ability and for the various major industrial sites and factories that the company runs?

Are there any plans for the future of the Rover Group? We have heard much about difficulties that can be caused by political debate, but what are the plans for the group if the EC should reject the current proposals? The Government seem to have written off any hopes for the company in the absence of BAe. Have the Government considered what will happen if the shareholders object? What guarantees have the Government extracted from the five-year rule? We have not heard much about that.

What would happen if BAe were taken over? There have been possible bidders in the past. There is a list of companies that might be interested in taking it over. For example, GEC has expressed an interest. Other possibilities are thought to be Hanson Trust plc, BTR plc and Thorn EMI plc. Given the recent profit failings of BAe, a takeover is hardly an impossibility. If that were to happen, what guarantees would remain with the Rover Group and what would be the strength of the Rover Group?

The Minister said that if there were a sale of any major part of the company it would lose any economic gain as a result. How do the Government define economic gain? Does that encompass a distress sale or unloading the Rover Group into another area for economic gain in the strategic interest of the company rather than for immediate cash gain? How will the Government judge the economic gain to the company? Will the Government put the matter before the House if a major disposal is planned? When the Government say that they will consider these matters, do they mean that they will do so at a Cabinet meeting or within a Department, with the result that we shall never have the chance to debate the issue on the Floor of the House?

The Government must acknowledge that, while the deal may be good for BAe at a time of losses on several aircraft orders and uncertainty over the Airbus, BAe has no expertise in the manufacture and selling of motor cars and no expertise in the overseas markets of the sort engaged in by the Rover Group. Its expertise lies in specialised international defence markets. I note that it has been suggested that BAe had no interest in the Rover Group as a whole. It was interested only in Land Rover as that division comes under the military wing and, to some extent, within the interest of the Government.

The future of the group will depend on the willingness of the owners of Rover, nationalised or privatised, to invest in its future and to see it through dark days as well as good. That is the history of the company. That is the history of car manufacturing throughout Europe and throughout the world. There is rise and fall followed by rise and fall. The winners are those who can invest during the falls and who are prepared to do so. The evidence is that BAe, willing or not, is in no position to give such guarantees.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall try again. This is a short debate and short speeches will be in order.

9.14 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I guarantee briefness, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, having heard what sounded like Gilbert and Sullivan without the songs and the humour from Opposition Members, I was at one stage tempted to speak at length.

I wish to pay tribute to my constituents' work in the Rover Group factories, in the component manufacturing industry and in the many dealerships throughout the midlands. I pay tribute to their improvements in productivity, their better designs, their better appreciation of their markets, their more professional management skill and their more dedicated work force. Surely these are guarantees of an excellent company that has put its house right and is now seeking a partner.

Opposition Members who use phrases such as "the deal of the century" and "to get rid of" denigrate a great British company that employs many of my constituents and constituents of many colleagues on both sides of the House. They do themselves and their parties great harm in not recognising that. It is sad to see such unbelievably negative attitudes and almost synthetic passions about the arrangement between a great British car company, which is now high-tech and enjoying high productivity, and a great British Aerospace company, again high-tech and enjoying high productivity. It would seem to be an excellent marriage and one in the national interest. It will benefit the future of the people working in the company —both managers and employees—and the future of the component manufacturers and dealers.

I condemn the synthetic disagreement expressed by Opposition Members with a Conservative Government giving money to someone and writing off debt. Opposition Members were not singing that tune last week. However, if that action enables the company to approach its new partner and match the strengths of the two companies, it must be beneficial. So many Opposition Members are interested only in looking for notional weaknesses in the partnership rather than the strengths.

The Rover Group includes Austin Rover. Land Rover is particularly important to my constituency. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), who has listened so assiduously to the debate, takes a passionate interest in this matter. He and I represent Land Rover employees in the borough of Solihull. We are aware that this merger is very important for the people working in Land Rover. Their plans for the future will be aided by the strength that British Aerospace can bring to the Rover Group. Indeed, the employees at the Rover Group will bring strength to British Aerospace.

I do not have many questions to ask my hon. Friend the Minister. Indeed, perhaps I should address my questions to Opposition Members. Perhaps the Opposition will tell us what they would do with the group. Will they renationalise it if they have the chance? They will not have that chance, but let us enter their thinking and learn what they intend to do. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was not clear about that.

Would public ownership be to the advantage of my constituents? It is inconceivable in a highly competitive world market that public ownership could continue to allow a company like the Rover Group to develop, to design, have access to the markets and to be successful. The Opposition are living so far in the past that their comments tonight will go unreported, largely unnoticed

and unsupported by the majority of people in the midlands to whom I have talked about this natural partnership involving two great British companies. The company needs the resources to compete with European competitors in 1992 and also with international competitors. It must also compete with emergent nations like Korea and China. I hope that China will thank us when it gets its car manufacturing going.

I have many Jaguar workers in my constituency. I worked in the components industry for 18 years and I know the car industry and its dealers. I welcome this period of stability. I encourage the Government in their efforts to ensure that the European Commission approves the proposal as quickly as possible and I wish all the employees in the Rover Group success in future.

9.18 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I will be as brief as I possibly can to allow other hon. Members to speak. However, I must declare an interest as I am the joint president of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union.

At the end of the day the workers must work in the industry under any management. The Government have a lot of cheek in pretending that this is a grand strategy which has been proposed as part of a long-term plan. That is absolutely wrong. The Government simply did not want a privatised company. Why could not the Government have written off the debt and let the company remain where it was? The profits would then have come in. However, that did not suit the Government's commitment.

There are 71,000 people employed in British Aerospace and 60,000 are employed directly in the Rover Group. That 60,000 does not include workers in the components industry. Rover Group and British Aerospace are two of the major exporters in this country.

In the short time available to me, I wish to pay tribute to the people responsible for that success—the workers in those industries. Some of them are members of my trade union, while others belong to different unions. None of them has been consulted by the company. Indeed, the company has kept them at arm's length and has failed to consult them about the future of the industries in which they work, despite the 22 per cent. sales increase at Austin Rover and a similar increase at Land Rover. There has also been a tremendous increase in export sales, and a 16 per cent. overall rise in production at both Rover and Land Rover. It is on the basis of that success story that the company has been sold to British Aerospace.

We heard from the Minister, when he opened the debate, the usual glib and shallow speech, but he has given no answers about the future. What guarantees about the future have been sought by the Government? When the Minister replies, I hope he will answer some of the questions that have been put. We know that the K-series engine is going ahead, and that it is a highly successful and versatile engine. We know also that the R8 is due to come on stream in 1989, and I am sure that it will be a very successful model. However, what about the replacement for the Metro? Was any guarantee sought by the Government in that connection?

It is true that neither of the companies has funds available for the new model programme. What guarantees have been given in that respect? We have heard that Honda are prepared to collaborate, but what terms have been agreed? What kind of collaboration will there be with Honda in the future? I am concerned about Longbridge and Cowley. Will one of them be sold off for property development—because we have heard about the situation in which British Aerospace has found itself?

The workers involved want answers to all those questions. Whatever may be the future, they are concerned about the success of the industry. They have made a success of British Aerospace and they want to continue in their jobs and build on that success. Have the Government sought any guarantees, and what replies has the Minister been given? Only when we know those facts—whether or not we shall be given them tonight, I am not sure—will we be able to judge whether the merger will be a success.

9.22 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I am surprised at the paucity of the arguments that have been advanced from the Opposition Benches tonight. During the whole time that British Leyland was the plaything of the dead hand of Socialism, or was in the manipulative hands of the trade unionists who operated it in Birmingham, where my constituents were dependent upon it for their jobs, there was a shambles all round. There were losses and there was the failure of the industry. Well does my hon. Friend—yes, I say "Friend"—the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) know that to be true, and well does he know the satisfaction of his own workers in that area of the city about the fresh Rover situation.

In the past we have seen the failure of the group being directly attributable to the manipulative scheming of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who put together the British Motor Corporation and made British Leyland a massive, overwhelming and complicated body of over-employment that was bound to make a loss. Now that that has been put to rights, no argument can be raised against it. Even Professor Bhattacharyya of Warwick university, who has worked on these matters and analysed them with the Austin-Rover Group, says that he expects that within three years or so the group under British Aerospace will be earning £250 million a year in profit.

It is probable that many of the new models will be produced—strangely enough—by an economic process engendered from profits, unknown in earlier times and unappreciated by Opposition Members: the installation of good management, the cultivation of excellent labour relations which did not exist before, and the development of factories able to produce goods that are wanted throughout the world. Exports have risen throughout Europe and in the far east, and the group is responsible for producing three quarters of the cars that we export.

Now, rightly, the business is being retained in British hands. That was demanded overwhelmingly by the Opposition in previous years, when they joined us in claiming that it was wrong for British Leyland or the Austin-Rover Group to be sold abroad. Now the situation has been saved: it is in British hands. However, the Opposition are still complaining about the position, as indeed are the French. The French say that the deal will prevent the organisation of a pan-European international aeroplane business. I find that those arguments are strangely not shared by the Germans, who are attempting —unsuccessfully—to do precisely what the Government have been able to do with this formula.

[Mr. David Gilroy Bevan]

If the French are complaining, I am very happy that this is an excellent formula. A full part is being played by the British car manufacturing industry, in a new way and a new form which will succeed, and which the Opposition do not like.

9.26 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, West): I do not think that the long-term interests of a successful Rover Group—or of the country's car industry—are helped by the ideological ranting about the dead hand of Socialism such as we have just heard, any more than they are helped by the unbelievable protestations from Conservative Members that we have debated the Rover Group a number of times recently. Whose responsibility is that? It is, of course, the Government's responsibility, as they brought forward the proposals to sell off the group, just as previously they were anxious to get rid of it at any price to Ford. That is why the company is continually in front of the public as a matter of general debate. It is a matter of the Government's own choosing, through their ideological commitment—there is no other industrial rationale—to remove the company from the public sector.

As has been said, a remarkably generous deal is being offered to British Aerospace. I emphasise that my concern is to ensure that the revenue and capital resources that are available are applied within Rover Group, and are applied to investment in the model range. No one with the interests of the industry at heart wants Rover Group to be saddled with a millstone of debt for the future. We are right to ask, however, what tangible benefit the Government have secured for the future of the company and the industry in the negotiations through which those generous terms were reached.

My particular concern is for the future of the Cowley plant in my constituency. As production of the Maestro comes to an end, and in the knowledge that production of the Montego will not continue for ever, it is abundantly clear that however successful is the excellent Rover 800 and its derivatives—in that respect, much turns on the value of the pound—we are fast approaching a point at which the prospects for employment at Cowley require the announcement of a new model, and confirmation that the Rover 800 reskinning will go ahead by 1992.

I have every confidence that, given the opportunity, Cowley will deliver the goods. Cowley has an extremely committed and skilled work force at all levels which has been responsible for dramatic improvements in productivity and quality. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) in saying how unbelievably disrespectful to the work force it was for the Minister to praise Graham Day and not to utter a word of praise for the commitment of the workers which has actually turned the company round. I trust that the Minister will rectify that omission.

Internal company studies show that the workers at Cowley are being expected to put in 20 per cent. more effort than workers in West German car plants. The commitment of the work force is not in doubt. Cowley is eminently suited to producing competitive and successful models for the future, which the country and our community want. At the same time, however, it is clear that expressions of confidence in the future must be based on more than that excellent potential and the Minister's vague aspirations. We need a clear indication of the model programme, and we need to know that resources will be available to build on Rover's undoubted strengths to put that programme into effect.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, the Government have no industrial strategy whatsoever to ensure that that happens. The workers at Cowley, and those in Oxford and in other areas most immediately affected, want to know what the Government have done to represent their interests in the takeover. What have the Government done to secure a viable future for the plant? As the public custodian of the company, what have they done to make sure that there will be new models for the future? What have they done to make certain that the deal does not become an asset-stripping exercise in the long term?

The Minister's response to my earlier interventions about the conditions under which British Aerospace might divest itself of substantial holdings or parts of sites will have done nothing to reassure my constituents or others in the west midlands who are dependent upon the Rover Group for their livelihood. I shall listen very carefully to the reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry. If he says, as the Chancellor of the Duchy has said, that the Government in these negotiations sought to impose no such constraints and that it is up to the management and the market, I shall have to say that that answer simply is not good enough. It is further evidence that the Government set a higher stake on washing their hands of the Rover Group than securing a prosperous future for my constituents and for the country.

If the deal goes ahead, we must all hope that the amalgamated company is successful, and we must do what we can to ensure that it is successful. If the deal goes ahead, the Government should be left in no doubt whatsoever of their responsibility for the consequences. A responsible Government would not be embarking upon this course, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and others have pointed out. The Government are pursuing their ideological commitment in such a cavalier and uncertain way, and without the assurances for the future that could and should have been obtained, that no one can be in any doubt where the responsibility will lie if things go wrong. That responsibility rests squarely on the Government. For ideological reasons, the Government may seek to wash their hands of the Rover Group, but they must and will not be allowed to escape the consequences of the decision that they have taken.

9.33 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): There have been two themes from the two sides of the House. From the Conservative Members we have heard forced praise for the arrangements, and from Opposition Members we have heard doubt, hesitation and pain. From nowhere has there been a "glad, confident morning", from nowhere has there been a real welcome.

We have heard forced praise from Conservative Back Benchers who have to say something nice and do not have the understanding to say the truth or the guts to ask for guarantees and therefore have clutched at straws—from which Central Office makes the bricks for them to drop—by claiming that there is some kind of synergy involved. There is as much synergy in this merger as there would be

if Rover were to merge with the manufacturer of the fluffy dice that hang in the back of cars. The best test of synergy is the reviews in the quality newspapers. The *Financial Times* said:

"The industrial logic behind the proposal scarcely adds up to much."

The Guardian said:

"In terms of industrial logic the merger is madness."

The Economist said that so much industrial logic is

"PR flannel. Aircraft and cars are utterly different to make, utterly different to sell. Rover needs car company skills, full stop."

That is true.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are trying to make the best of a bad job. It is time that we looked at the basic truth, which is that the Government have betrayed, are now betraying and will continue to betray the British car industry. The car industry in this and any other country is central to a powerful manufacturing economy. We need a strong manufacturing industry and a strong car industry. Our industry has been allowed to shrink so that we are now well behind any other major industrial country in the share of home market that our car industry has and in the size and capacity of our domestic producer. Our car trade deficit with the EEC is nearly one third of our visible trade deficit.

The Government have betrayed the car industry because they have used a high exchange rate as a discipline on industry. They are dedicated to making the land fit for investors to live in. For investors to invest overseas they need a high pound. The Government have refused to let the market operate on the pound by propping it up with high interest rates, thus imposing a double burden on industry. That has caused the ruination of the car industry in the years during which they have been in office.

Imports make up a large share of our market. It is a far higher share than in any other industrial country. That has occurred simply because of the economic policies carried through by the Government. That is the first betrayal.

The second betrayal is the Government's failure to compensate the industry for the consequences of their folly. Let us look at the walking wounded that came out of their industrial folly. The problem is that Rover is not big enough for a volume car producer. It is not big enough to obtain the economies of scale that it needs and there is not enough investment to enable it to become the specialist up-market producer that it needs to be.

Between those two stools Rover is sinking. It needs help to overcome its problems. Every major car manufacturer in the world has had problems at some stage and in every other country the car industry has been helped and sustained by its Government. Volkswagen, Fiat, Peugeot, Renault and Chrysler in the United States have all received help. That help has built up and sustained the car industries, not whittled them down, which is what has happened in Britain. It would cost us to provide that help, but we must carry those costs if we are to maintain the car industry, which is vital to manufacturing. We cannot just close the industry down. We have to build it up and that is why the Government have to sustain their responsibility.

In every other country Governments work with industry. In this country the highest wisdom of the Government is to wash their hands of industry. They have a Lady Macbeth approach to industry. They want to wash their hands and divest themselves of it. We understand that the Minister is under a binding mandate from the Prime Minister to get rid of Rover. That is what this is all about. Let us look at how the Minister could approach that.

The only test of whether the industry could be privatised is whether it could be floated on the market. It fails that test because nobody will buy it. If it were floated, it would sink. Even if it were advertised as a slightly used car industry with one lady owner, it would not sell. The Government cannot float it; they will not build it up; they would rather give the money to tax cuts. They cannot close it—even Sir Keith Joseph was not crazy enough to do that. It would pull the heart out of the industrial midlands.

The Government cannot even adopt the Victor Kyam approach. He is the man who liked the Remington razor and bought the company. That is the approach the Government are taking with British Shipbuilders—"You like the ships? Have the shipyard." They cannot take that approach with Rover because no one will have it given to them. So they must do what they have done. First, they put in Mr. Graham Day to give Rover the anorexia nervosa treatment—to sell it all off. What is the logic in selling off all those related businesses? The list of them is enormous and I shall not go through it all. He has sold off all those car businesses and divested the company of responsibility in the car industry for radiators and engineering design, and then merged with another company in a wholly unrelated business.

If Rover is to compete in the world it must be a specialist, strong car producer, not a limping part of another organisation in another activity. There is no logic in what Mr. Day has done, apart from prettying up the profits to get the company sold as quickly as possible. He has gone for profit, not market share. Market share has fallen consistently under his running of the company. That is the major test, and he has not solved the problems.

Now the Government are getting rid of the company. It would be better for the taxpayer to sell it to a foreign manufacturer who would pay more for it, but the Government's Back Benchers would not allow them to do that, and rightly so. They would get more money for the company in that way, but they must sell it to a British firm —but which one? That is the Government's problem. Who will take it off their hands?

Enter the well-known industrial Toby jug Professor Smith. He is not daft. He will not take Rover from the Government or have it given to him. He must be paid to take it. He will drive a hard bargain. However much he gets—one estimate is £650 million, another is £250 million —he will have been paid to take the company off the Government's hands. And that is a good deal for the Government. It uses the window of opportunity that arises as the company becomes profitable again and as the exchange rate fall of 1986 makes it profitable again. The deal allows the Government to get rid of the company, which is their highest ambition and wisdom.

The problem is that it is no ringing declaration of confidence in Rover, if the Government are so anxious to get rid of it that they will pay someone to take it. Conservative Members may criticise us for being critical of it, but this is a good deal for the Government because it gets rid of their obligation. It is our responsibility not to be taken in by ministerial speeches that are more sighs of relief than arguments.

What is to happen next? Now comes the Wendy hamburger question: where is the logic of this deal? Aerospace is an industry which needs heavy long

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

investment runs. If British Aerospace wants a merger with other firms it would do best to take over an insurance company, a money cow that will provide the assistance to keep it going through early investment runs.

The merger with Rover will certainly put up BAe's earnings per share. Phillips and Drew say that they will be approximately doubled. The merger will give British Aerospace a stronger share price which will help it to avoid takeovers and give it better survivability.

For the rest, the merger only adds to the problems of British Aerospace. Both organisations have problems now that the dollar is falling and the pound rising. The pound has risen in real terms by 18 per cent. since the last quarter of 1986. That poses major problems for British exports and manufacturing. Tying these two firms together when there is an overvalued exchange rate is as logical as tying two one-legged men together and expecting them to compete in a three-legged race.

The merger will demand management time from British Aerospace which can scarcely be spared, given the company's severe problems with commercial aircraft. The merged Rover will need money of its own. It needs the new investment for new models that my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) mentioned. It must have investment to keep going. If it is to be worth anything to Honda, it must have something to offer. That requires investment.

Once the survivability crisis has passed in two or three years, the company will need massive sums, which British Aerospace will not be able to provide and which Rover will not be big enough to generate from its own sales. According to the evidence of its previous managing director, it needs sales of more than 600,000 vehicles to generate the profit needed for new investment. The company is not making anything like that amount.

There is nothing much in it for British Aerospace, apart from in the immediate short-term period. There is nothing in it for Rover. It is not even a resting place for Rover. The basic dilemma remains: the company is not big enough to produce the volume and there is not enough investment for specialist production. There is no escape from that dilemma. That is why Rover must stay with the state. It is a matter not of the case for and against nationalisation but of who has the power, the muscle and the money to provide the investment to build up Rover. That is essential to our industrial base and economy. No one else is qualified to do it, and that is why the company should remain with the state. That is why the Minister is being irresponsible in getting rid of it in this fashion.

Labour would keep the company in the state and build it up as the kernel of the manufacturing expansion which will dominate the 1990s, with a Labour Government rebuilding our economy and using Rover as the powerhouse for that expansion. The job of the next Labour Government will be to rebuild from the wreckage generated by this Government.

Rover finds a reasonable home. New parents move into it, but they do not like Rover. They want to get rid of Rover so they do not feed or sustain it. In that case, Rover is probably better off with the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals. That is what is happening to the Rover Group, but it is not the best fate for it. Rover should be expanded and sustained through the difficulties. The Government have that responsibility. The responsibility for Rover, the future of the car industry, the workers in it and the dependent industries all over the west midlands is the Minister's. He is not getting rid of that responsibility by this manoeuvre. We will hold him to it.

9.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): I have the good fortune to be a Member of Parliament for a constituency in which the Rover Group and British Aerospace have substantial interests, so I am well placed to speak with some knowledge about the activities of both companies. The Rover Group originally started as Leyland Motors in the town of Leyland, in my constituency, so I can speak with some personal knowledge and the knowledge of my constituents about what Leyland, now the Rover Group, has achieved, the problems which it has faced and the potential success offered by this deal.

British Aerospace operates near my constituency, with the military aircraft division centred in the Preston area. The aircraft activities of British Aerospace have been especially pertinent to the good fortune which has been achieved by many of my constituents who work for that company or for Royal Ordnance, which is partly based in my constituency.

The privatisations which have come to British Aerospace, to Royal Ordnance, to Leyland Trucks, now Leyland-DAF, and to Leyland Bus, now part of the Volvo group, have been a great success.

Mr. Nellist: Are job losses a success?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman, who, as always, is concerned about matters relating to the motor industry and to Coventry, should not gainsay the fact that the difficulties faced by these companies have been overcome by privatisation. Many of the constituents of my hon. Friends who have been here and participated in the debate will confirm that. I visited Leyland-DAF the other day and drove the 50,000th truck off the line. Productivity has doubled since privatisation, and that is not the only example that I could give. I am sure that the same will be the case with regard to the deal between the Rover Group and British Aerospace. My constituents and those of my hon. Friends have achieved some remarkable results. They have had to do so because the pressure of world competition on the passenger car and commercial market has been substantial. It forced them to realise that productivity had to be improved.

We have heard that not only the constituents of my hon. Friends but dealers, component manufacturers and almost anyone who knows anything about the motor industry welcome this deal—except of course the Labour party. The speeches of Labour Members were well summed up by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller), who made a typically robust speech. He said that the Labour party is out of date and does not recognise the new interests that are being pursued by those who work in the motor industry. It does not recognise that this deal is important for the future of the two companies. It is ever ready to snipe, predict doom and gloom and disaster and devalue possible and actual success. It is now following the dictum that the Opposition's duty is to oppose. It goes to such lengths to score what it classes as a few points, but that flies in the

face of the industry's success story, which has been achieved as a result of its hard work at management and shop floor level in overcoming its difficulties.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster dealt with the substance of the debate, but a number of matters have been raised that I should try to deal with in the short time available to me. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), in his usual, reasonable and amenable way, refused to answer the question that was asked by my right hon. and hon. Friends about whether the Labour party would renationalise the Rover Group if, as we confidently expect and hope, the deal goes through. We have noted that the hon. Gentleman avoided answering that question. I know that there are difficulties in the Labour party about its exact policy on social ownership, public ownership and nationalisation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The question is whether the deal will help the Rover Group to survive. The question that should be put to the Government is, if the deal does not work and the Rover Group suffers as a consequence, will the Government take it back and support it as they should?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman must not wag his finger at me. I have asked the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham a question, but I have received no answer. My hon. Friends and I want to hear an answer. Would the Labour party renationalise the Rover Group?

The hon. Member for Dagenham asked about Honda. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State have said on many occasions that Honda welcomed continuity of British—British Aerospace —management. *[Interruption.]* I shall say again, so that the hon. Member for Dagenham can hear, that Honda welcomed the continuity of British management, as represented by British Aerospace, which, in case the hon. Gentleman was not aware, is British management.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Did Honda welcome the deal?

Mr. Atkins: I have just said so. The hon. Gentleman should listen. Honda welcomed the continuity of British management and the deal that we are debating. It positively welcomed it—what more does the hon. Gentleman want?

Mr. Gould: I assume that the Minister chose his phrase with care and placed emphasis on the continuity of British management. He took care to correct what I take to be a slip of the tongue when he talked of British Aerospace management. The impression given is that Honda expressed strong support for the existing management. Is that what the Minister is saying?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman has a capacity to split a phrase into different words and to make of them what he wants. Honda welcomed the deal. It welcomed continuity of British management and the future as represented by British Aerospace. Does the hon. Gentleman want it spelt out any more clearly than that? Honda welcomed the deal. There it is, and there it lies.

The hon. Gentleman asked what British Aerospace knows about making cars. What does Ford know about making aircraft? There is a company called Ford Aerospace within the group which knows a great deal about making aircraft.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) made an excellent speech, which showed how much he knows about the motor industry. He said that management is what counts, and consultation with the work force. It almost does not matter what is being made as long as the management and the work force are properly looked after and properly understand what is required—the end product—in a variety of areas.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about British Aerospace commitment. The company has made it clear that it is delighted with the continuity that it sees in the management of Graham Day, and the plans and ideas that he has set out, both publicly and privately, about the future of the Rover Group. It wishes to abide by those ideas and plans.

The hon. Member for Dagenham called in aid Aerospatiale. I find that astonishing, because the French never miss a chance to undermine the British aerospace industry, particularly—as I have cause to know in my constituency—when they have considerable problems in their own industry, caused largely by the success of British Aerospace and other related companies. To pray in aid Aerospatiale is taking it a long way down the line, and the hon. Gentleman should be careful.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Atkins: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not, as I have only a few moments and several questions to answer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove asked me a particular question. I assure him that nothing in the detailed arrangements that we have been discussing would prevent further collaboration or joint ventures with other manufacturers, provided that control of the principal businesses remained unchanged. Nor would the arrangements inhibit any shareholding in the principal businesses by the potential collaborative party. I hope that that goes some way to answering his problem.

A number of hon. Members have asked about so-called guarantees. Without constraining British Aerospace's day-to-day management of the business, we have agreed important conditions on the acquisition. British Aerospace has undertaken not to relinquish control of Austin Rover or Land Rover within five years. This undertaking is supported by legal arrangements that ensure that, even if there were to be a sale within five years, the net financial benefits of British Aerospace's holding of the business and the net proceeds of the sale would be repaid to the Government subject to a ceiling of £650 million. British Aerospace has made clear its intention to hold and develop the businesses, but these arrangements ensure that it would not be to its financial advantage to break its undertaking. I cannot be more clear than that.

Mr. Nellist: I represent more than one or two aerospace and car workers, and I am probably the only hon. Member in the Chamber who has had a job with the predecessors of both Rover and British Aerospace. There is not much connection between a Rapier and a Rover—between a ground-to-air missile and a family saloon car. What confidence can car or aerospace workers have in Graham Day, who sold 18 businesses in two years and reduced the number of shipbuilders by 55,000 in the previous three

[Mr. Nellist]

years, or in Mr. Smith, who talked about reducing the number of aerospace workers by about a third by 1992, or in Lord Young? He said on the Channel 4 business programme of 6 March:

"We will not impose conditions about manufacture at Cowley and Longbridge."

What confidence can car workers and aerospace workers have in anything that the Government spokesmen have said tonight?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, which I dealt with in some detail earlier. I hope that he will allow me to proceed to ensure that the debate is concluded in a proper way.

In his opening speech, my right hon. and learned Friend made it clear why, when one takes account of all the components of this agreement, and not the simple arguments relating merely to the cash injection and consideration, this deal represents a fair balance of various interests. I stress that the Government believe that privatisation is in the interest of the business. On that matter, I can do no better than to quote Graham Day, who said, when explaining why putting the business back in the private sector had been one of his objectives:

"For me, it is not simply a matter of ideology, it is a matter of very good common business sense."

The Government for their part were determined that privatisation should take place in a way that recognised the contribution made to the economy by the Rover Group and gave the company the best available chance of developing its independent role in the vehicle industry.

This is an excellent deal for the Rover Group and an excellent deal for British Aerospace. It is an excellent deal for the taxpayer and also for many of our constituents whose interests have been so ably represented in the speeches made by my hon. Friends. We are exceedingly proud of the deal and more than content for it to be subjected to scrutiny when it is completed, as we hope it will be. I know that my hon. Friends will recognise that we believe that this deal could be very exciting for the future of this country.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Immigration Bill and the Lords Amendments to the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Immigration Bill

Lords amendments considered.

New Clause

MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

Lords amendment: No. 1, after clause 3, insert new clause:

" . At the beginning of subsection (3) of section 8 of the principal Act (exemption from immigration control for members of diplomatic missions etc) there shall be inserted the words "Subject to subsection (3A) below," and after that subsection there shall be inserted—

"(3A) In the case of a member of a mission other than a diplomatic agent (within the meaning of the said Act of 1964) subsection (3) above shall apply only if he enters or has entered the United Kingdom—

(a) as a member of that mission; or

(b) in order to take up a post as such a member which was offered to him before his arrival;

and references in that subsection to a member of a mission shall be construed accordingly.""

Read a Second time.

10 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 3, in clause 11, page 5, line 31, after "3" insert *"(Members of diplomatic missions)"*

Mr. Renton: The third amendment depends on the first, and both are proposed by the Government.

The proposed amendment of section 8(3) of the 1971 Act seeks to improve the effectiveness of immigration control in relation to those who at present are granted exemption from the control by virtue of employment as a member of a mission. It has entered the lists at this late stage because the extent and nature of the problem have been identified only quite recently and the proposed solution has required careful consideration in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Section 8(3) of the Immigration Act 1971 confers exemption from immigration control on all members of a mission within the meaning of the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964—together with members of the family forming part of the household. No distinction is drawn between the various categories of staff employed in foreign missions. Exemption is accorded to caretakers and drivers as well as to full diplomatic agents. More particularly, the exemption extends to all locally engaged staff—that is, someone who has come to this country for another purpose and then been taken into employment by a mission.

That leads to the rather curious state of affairs whereby locally engaged staff with no entitlement to any form of diplomatic immunity or privilege are, none the less, automatically accorded exemption from immigration control by virtue of section 8(3) of the 1971 Act.

The exemption places anyone employed as a member of a mission beyond the framework of control set out in the Immigration Act and the rules. This position is not satisfactory as it can be exploited by a number of people who would not otherwise qualify to remain in this country. That happens in a number of ways. At one end of the spectrum there are those who are here lawfully but whose conditions do not allow them to take employment—for

example, people admitted initially as visitors or students, who then switch to employment with a mission when they no longer have any basis for remaining.

Then there are those who might be termed "prospective overstayers", who use missions as a safe haven. I have in mind those who are awaiting the outcome of an appeal against a refusal to extend their leave to remain. They may then seek to secure their position by taking employment with a mission in the knowledge that they cannot then be removed, even if the appeal is unsuccessful.

Finally, there are those who clearly have no basis under the rules for remaining in the United Kingdom. They include illegal entrants, those on temporary admission or overstayers themselves.

The numbers are not at all large. In 1986, 119 overstayers or illegal entrants took up employment that entitled them to exemption from immigration control, and a further 286 people, whose conditions of stay prohibited employment, had these conditions removed on the grounds of their exempt employment. The great majority of them were employed as members of missions. While the scale of the abuse is not great, so long as this method of evading removal remains, it is sadly inevitable that it will be exploited from time to time.

We are not concerned with those who are appointed as full diplomatic agents. We do not wish to intervene in that area, and that is not where the problems arise. The evidence of abuse is restricted to those in what are known as categories C and D employment with a mission—administrative and technical staff and those employed in the domestic service of the mission, such as drivers and caretakers.

The effect of the new clause will be that locally engaged staff in non-diplomatic posts and their families will no longer be exempt from immigration control. Missions will be able to continue to employ locally engaged staff in those categories if their immigration status enables them to take that employment. It may also be possible for others to be employed in those categories, but only if the mission notifies the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of their appointment in accordance with the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office needs to be satisfied that the individual is in bona fide employment and thus entitled to immunities and privileges. Where those requirements are met, the mission may be allowed to take on locally engaged staff in those categories. However, if it does, those members of the mission will be subject to immigration control. Furthermore, in accordance with the Vienna convention, the mission will be required to notify the appointment of the individual and the termination of his appointment. Those changes will improve the effectiveness of our control procedures.

Nothing in the proposed amendment resiles from the United Kingdom's commitment as a signatory to the Vienna convention. Our approach is not inconsistent with that adopted by other countries to the employment of locally engaged staff in our missions abroad. On the contrary, the proposed amendment simply puts into practice the advice already given to missions by the Vice Marshall of the Diplomatic Corps that they should not employ persons who would not otherwise be permitted to work in the United Kingdom. Equally, the proposed amendment will not apply retrospectively. Those already employed by a mission will retain their exemption from immigration control while they remain in that capacity.

The new arrangements will be fully explained to missions before the amendments come into effect. The proposed consequential amendment to clause 11 would simply provide the amendment to section 8(3) to be brought into effect by means of a commencement order.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): It is interesting to note that, at this stage in the passage of the legislation through both Houses, we are now raking up this type of amendment. I find it interesting that the Minister says that the Government have only now identified this problem. I get the impression that this is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Certainly the Minister has not impressed on me the need for the amendments. He has not explained the extent of the problem to which he has referred and which has resulted in the amendments being tabled in another place and accepted by the Government.

If there is abuse we would have no truck with it. I notice that the Minister giggles. When we were in Committee the Minister used to become insulting, rude and—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Conservative Members know that every time the Minister was on the ropes in Committee he behaved in that way. It is interesting that, after all these weeks, we get such giggles from the Minister when we again debate immigration.

The Minister should explain in more detail the scale of the problem. In which embassies and missions has this abuse been perceived to have taken place? Exactly how did he come across this problem? How was it perceived? What agencies were used to find out about this? Were the police involved or was it just the immigration service? The House must be clear that there is a need for this information. I have made it clear that I would not in any way support any abuse of diplomatic immunities or the breaking of the law. There is no dispute about that. We are trying to obtain from the Minister what was miserably lacking in his speech. We have no insight into the matter.

I would welcome any Conservative Member standing up and explaining in detail the nature of the problem. I am willing to give way, but no hon. Member stands up because nobody understands the detail of the problem. The Minister must give us more information about which countries are involved and how the problems were identified. We need to know the nature of the abuse and who was doing the abusing. Was it the drivers, the cleaners or people who had failed on an appeal process or who had an appeal outstanding? We need to know more if we are not to divide the House on the amendments.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Randall: I think that it would be valuable to the House if the Minister explained in more detail what is happening in other countries.

Mr. Hanley: In the unreal world, when the hon. Gentleman might be responsible for immigration law in this country, what would he do, if he discovered that 119 people would have deliberately defrauded international law, if it were not for this clause? If he discovered that a further 280 people had abused or were about to abuse the privileges of international diplomatic immunity, would he have acted in the way that the Minister acted or would he ignore it, because 400 people are too few?

Mr. Randall: The hon. Member has come up with some statistics—[HON. MEMBERS: "You asked for them".] Hon. Members are baying for an answer and I shall give them an answer, as I always do. The hon. Member has come up with those statistics, and I do not know whether they are just made up. The hon. Member knows much about these matters, because he is a member of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. [HON. MEMBERS: "He was".] He was. I do not know why he left. He was a member of the Select Committee and he has studied these matters. He has come up with figures which are revealing. Are they authentic or are they made up? If they are authentic, the hon. Gentleman seems to have given the House much more information about the matter than the Minister has. That is the sort of detail that we all want.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): My hon. Friend mentioned the figures given by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). Does he recall that, in Committee, when reference was made by the Government in clause 4 to the seven-year limit, the hon. Gentleman volunteered the information that that was the limit that had been adhered to in the Limitation Act 1963? That is another example to show that figures and statistics are being made up by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes, and are being misused in this way.

Mr. Randall: I do not know whether the figures are authentic, but I will give way to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Member may have done the same research as I have to find the figures, but that is irrelevant. I am certain that that would not have happened, as the hon. Gentleman's research is painfully shallow. I asked the hon. Gentleman questions. I asked how, if those figures were the truth, he would have acted when confronted with that information. Will the hon. Gentleman have the courage and decency to answer my questions and not prevaricate?

10.15 pm

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman is obviously suggesting that his figures are untrue. When we all read *Hansard* avidly tomorrow, we shall realise that the hon. Gentleman is playing with words and that he does not believe that those figures are true.

I shall answer the question. I have already said twice that, if there were abuse on a large scale, Labour Members would have no truck with the breaking of the law and the abuse of diplomatic missions. Perhaps the Minister will confirm the figures of 119 and 280. I am not walking into a trap. The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes is grinning away. I know his tricks, but if there is large-scale abuse, we must take measures to prevent it. The Minister has failed to convince me that there is abuse on a large scale. He told the House clearly that he tumbled upon the fact. It is a new phenomenon for him. He said that the problem has only recently been identified.

Mr. Renton: We have become accustomed to the hon. Gentleman assuming the dormouse position in Committee, but he appears to have been singularly sleepy a few moments ago when my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) quoted the figures that I gave in my opening remarks. I said that the hon. Gentleman was asleep and I repeat that, in 1986, 119 overstayers or illegal entrants took up employment which entitled them to exemption from immigration control and a further 286 people whose conditions of stay prohibited employment had those conditions been removed on the ground of their exempt employment. My hon. Friend, with his mastery of mathematics, added up those figures and came to the figure of 400. That is precisely the figure that I quoted, but, once again, the hon. Gentleman was thinking so hard about what he could say to oppose this sensible amendment that he just was not listening.

Mr. Randall: The Minister and his hon. Friend have got the matter completely back to front. The Minister knows that to be so, because, on the one hand, he talks about figures for 1986 and, on the other hand, he talks about the new phenomenon. He cannot have it both ways. He either perceived the problem in 1986 or he has just perceived it. If I were in his position, I would explain when the problem was first perceived and mention the number of cases identified each year so that we could be clear about whether the problem was growing, diminishing or remaining stable. What kind of people were involved? The Minister has given us nothing tonight and, as usual, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes has put the cart before the horse and muddled both the House and himself.

I shall not spend much time on this, but we want clarification. The Minister has not justified the need for legislation to deal with the problem. Certainly, the figures that he has given have not shown us the extent of the problem. Will he tell us what forms of abuse he found? If it is a new phenomenon, what other nasties did he find under the stone?

Mr. Vaz: I take up my hon. Friend's comment about nasty things being hidden beneath the stones. It is refreshing to see the Minister of State in his place, and perhaps he will tell us something about the unopened letters at Lunar house. We hear his dulcet tones on "The World at One", but it would be more helpful if he made a statement on the current position at Lunar house.

Mr. Randall *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Before the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) is tempted to follow that road, I wish to make it clear that I find it difficult to associate Lunar house with the amendment.

Mr. Randall: Though tempted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I accept your ruling and shall not follow the path that has been put before me by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). I merely say in passing that the new clause makes clear reference to the documentation that is necessary for those seeking admission who have the right of abode. I think that my hon. Friend is suggesting that some of the documents that might be needed for admission might be caught in the administrative mess that the Minister has created both at Lunar house and Petty France. I shall take the point no further than that.

The Opposition are unhappy with the Minister's performance. He has failed to convince us of the need for change. He has failed to tell us about scale and he has failed to get the numbers right. I wish that he would give us a thorough and clear explanation that would give us the sense of conviction to vote for the amendment.

Mr. Renton: If I permitted myself a smile during the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) it was because I am normally a cheerful fellow, and because of the hon. Gentleman's remark that if there was abuse in the immigration procedures the Opposition would wish to put a stop to it.

Anyone who served on the Committee which considered the Bill would know well that when we were discussing clause 5 and seeking to make overstaying a continuous criminal offence, as it was originally intended to be in the 1962 legislation, the Opposition were against us closing the door on this evident abuse of immigration control. Those who overstay their permission to be in this country are consciously or knowingly breaking the conditions under which they were permitted to enter. It is therefore only logical that overstaying should be a continuous offence, yet constantly the Opposition argued against that in Committee. Against that background the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West had the gall to say that if there was abuse of immigration procedures the Opposition would be against it. That is a statement of such hypocrisy that it is not surprising that I broke into a slight smile.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Minister agree that it is rather unfair to accuse my right hon. and hon. Friends and me of being against any sanction for abuse of immigration legislation? Surely he is aware that there are good administrative sanctions against overstayers that operate every day of the week and every week of the year, as I have reason to know. We know that adminstrative sanctions exist and we have never argued against them. We have argued against double jeopardy.

Mr. Renton: This issue arose many times in Committee. It was explained many times to the hon. Lady that there is a need for criminal procedures as well as administrative procedures and that the original intention was that overstaying should be a continuous offence. We explained also that it was our intention to bring it into that position again.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West has the beguiling characteristic of being able to turn a silk purse into a sow's ear. I presented an amendment to the House, which was approved in another place without a Division, to the effect that we should plug this minor gap in relation to those in non-diplomatic positions employed by embassies who find themselves outwith immigration controls as a result of taking up that employment. I should have thought that that was a fairly simple proposition on which hon. Members on both sides of the House could agree.

However, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West got himself into a great tangle over the figures. Are they too big or two small? I made it abundantly clear that the figure that we were talking about from the 1986 statistics was about 400. We did not learn from the hon,. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West whether he would support a figure of 600 or whether he would not support a figure of 200. He owes the House an explanation about that.

I quoted the figure and evidently the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West did not listen. What is wrong with the figure? Is it not large enough? Would he like a bigger figure or would he like a smaller one? Will the hon. Gentleman tell us? *[Interruption.]* Obviously, he will not. He is also permitting himself a little giggle, and perhaps that is not a bad thing.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South) *rose*——

Ms. Abbott *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I will give way to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) because I have already given way to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott).

Mr. Boateng: Over the months of discussion about this Bill, has it not sunk in that the Opposition's objection to this clause and to many others that the Government have presented is directed not simply to the clause but to the fact that the clause is an unpleasant little accretion on an already monstrous edifice of injustice? That is what we object to. That should surely have sunk in amidst all the suavity and charm.

Ms. Abbott: Charm?

Mr. Boateng: Yes, charm of a somewhat jaded and lethargic kind, but charm none the less. Has not our true objection to this nasty, sordid little measure sunk in?

Mr. Renton: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Brent, South was not a member of the Committee. I am sure that his hon. Friends could have made use of his expertise and wisdom because those qualities were at times sadly lacking on the Opposition Benches in Committee. He might have added something to their deliberations.

If the hon. Member for Brent, South is seriously suggesting that, having become conscious of the ability of those who came to this country as visitors subsequently to obtain employment when they were not permitted to do so —for example, as a driver or gardener in a diplomatic mission—and therefore be outwith immigration control, and, having perceived that gap in the rules, we should do nothing about it, he is making a very odd case. I should have thought that there was a general acceptance that we should do something about that omission once it had come to our attention. After detailed consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that is precisely what we are doing tonight.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked which mission had been involved. The problem has arisen in several cases. It would not be helpful to identify any particular mission as a major offender, but if he wants to continue to pursue that point with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, he might like to do that in detailed and private conversations.

I have already explained that exempt employment had been exploited by overstayers, illegal immigrants, and prospective overstayers, including students and visitors, whose immigration conditions preclude employment. Having detected that, it is only right to put an end to that practice, as we are doing tonight.

As it stands, section 8(3) of the Immigration Act 1971 provides for all members of a mission to be exempt from immigration control in a way that is not demanded by the terms of the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations. There is evidence that that form of employment has been exploited by those who would otherwise have no basis for remaining in this country. So long as this potential abuse remains, it is likely to be exploited in future. For that

[Mr. Renton]

reason, we are taking this opportunity to improve the effectiveness of our immigration control arrangements in that regard.

I commend the amendments to the House, and I find it hard to believe that the Opposition will vote against them.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 5

KNOWINGLY OVERSTAYING LIMITED LEAVE

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 3, line 37, at end insert "but a person shall not be prosecuted under that provision more than once in respect of the same limited leave."

10.30 pm

Mr. Renton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I am happy to accept this amendment. As shown during the Committee stage, it is not, and never has been, the Government's intention that multiple prosecution should be brought for overstaying the same period of limited leave. This amendment, which has been agreed in another place, makes it entirely clear that only one prosecution may be brought in respect of overstaying the same period of limited leave. It removes any doubts there could be about the effect of clause 5, and I am happy to commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Randall: We welcome the idea of inserting into the legislation the notion that there should not be multiple prosecutions for overstaying. One can justify the argument for that provision from the legal viewpoint. Although I am not a lawyer, I am sure that there are lawyers in the House who understand such matters and who would be able clearly to explain that it is a provision that one would want to make.

Overstaying is done by people intentionally, which is wrong, and sometimes—as we discussed to some considerable extent in Committee—for technical reasons and unintentionally. When one examines clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill, it is clear that the Government's line on overstaying has been harsh and wrong. The appeal procedures, which were perfectly adequate under the existing administrative arrangements, now mean that prosecutions will be brought far more often, because of the new option in the legislation—assuming that it receives Royal Assent.

Overstaying need not necessarily be evil or very bad —although, as with many other things, it can be abused and intentional. For that reason, overstaying is to be condemned, but removing the possibility of multiple prosecutions is to be welcomed.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): This minor amendment does little to remove or lessen the objections to this squalid and nasty Bill. It is typical that the Minister should seek to steer this squalid and nasty Bill through the House at 10.30 pm at night, aided by nine officials from the Home Office and after a trawl of the Tea Room, from where the semi-intellectual wing of the Conservative party has been dragged into the Chamber to give the Bill some support.

This Bill is friendless. Apart from the extreme Right wing of the Conservative party, the Bill has no friend at all. There is no one in favour of the Bill's provisions, no one who has clamoured for the Bill to be put on to the statute book, and no one—apart from the Government—who relishes the prospect of the Bill becoming law. Just how friendless it was could clearly be seen on Second Reading, when the Government secured the lowest majority so far achieved for any Bill—beaten only by the poll tax vote of recent weeks, which was even lower.

The amendment will do nothing to mitigate the fears and anxiety created by the Bill, especially clause 5. The Bill does nothing to help black and Asian communities, and the amendment will not remove the anger and resentment that it is creating throughout the country. It does nothing to help a constituent of mine who was widowed at the end of last year with five young children—the youngest two years old—and a small business to keep going. My constituent married recently, and he and his children are looking forward eagerly to his wife—their mother—joining them soon in Bradford.

I am sorry that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who was with us until a few minutes ago, has now left the Chamber. He wrote to me recently, in answer to my request that that woman be given a priority interview. He told me that she would have to wait until the end of this year, or early next year. He said that it would be wrong to grant her a priority interview, as it would mean that many others suffering from similar "compassionate" circumstances would not be given their interviews in time. If that is the case, instead of wasting time discussing the amendment and the Bill, the House should be discussing how the family of my constituent—and the families of others who the Minister tells me are in similar "compassionate" difficulties—can be united and their fear and anxiety alleviated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has just admitted that he is not really discussing the amendment. I am sure that, with his usual ingenuity, he can bring his remarks within the confines of the amendment.

Mr. Madden: Yes, indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the difficulty is that we are dealing with a Minister who proceeds by means of media hype. The Select Committee on Home Affairs was widely known recently to be producing a severe criticism of the administration of the Home Office. Days before that report was published, the media—obviously acting on leaks from the Home Office —was warning the nation that thousands were seeking to enter the country illegally, thereby trying to pre-empt the Select Committee's criticism of the Minister.

Ms. Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that—as with the previous amendment and the clause on polygamous wives—numbers are the essence here? The politics of the Bill has been to conjure up some huge threat to civilisation as we know it, and then call in aid the need of law. Just as there is no evidence of a steep rise in the number of overstayers, a whole clause has been devoted to the apparently world-menacing threat of polygamous wives trying to enter the country. When we inquired in Committee, we were told that an entire clause was devoted to a total of 26 polygamous wives a year. In this and the previous amendment the figures are not an irrelevance; they are central to the politics of the Bill.

Mr. Madden: My hon. Friend is exactly right. We should be clear that there is absolutely no need for the Government to acquire, through the Bill, any additional powers to deal with overstayers.

The Minister may not like it, but the blunt fact is that the administrative powers available to him to deal with overstayers are more than sufficient to deal with a very limited problem. Instead of discussing the Bill, we should be discussing the fact that last summer the Minister failed to heed the warnings of his senior staff and deal with the chaos that now grips Lunar house in dealing with registration applications for British citizens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am getting the distinct impression that we have returned to the Committee stage. We are now dealing with a fairly narrow Lords amendment. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian and I am sure that he will not abuse the procedures of the House by trying to widen the debate.

Mr. Madden: The difficulty is that, as each week has unfolded since the Committee stage, we have seen more evidence that the Bill is wholly irrelevant to the needs of black and Asian communities throughout the country that require positive action. For instance, we should be concerned with the appointment of more immigration officers so that interviews can be conducted——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must realise that he is trying to broaden this into a debate on immigration procedures. That would have been relevant at earlier stages of the Bill, but we are now dealing with a comparatively narrow Lords amendment and I must ask him to address himself to that.

Mr. Madden: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the amendment relates directly to the competence of the Home Office. Therefore, the sufficiency of immigration staff and the competence of the immigration and nationality department are related directly to the substance of the amendment. I would argue that it is germane to the debate for us to discuss the incompetence of the immigration and nationality department, the insufficiency of immigration officers and the general incompetence of the administration over which the Minister, in theory, presides.

Ms. Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister has smiled throughout the discussion on the amendment about overstayers? Does my hon. Friend agree also that if the Minister had any personal experience of the misery that is caused, particularly by the prosecution of possible overstayers, the miserable lives that some of them lead and the tragedy around some of the casework, he would not sit there smirking?

Mr. Madden: Indeed. Unfortunately, the Minister has not seen fit to resign, considering the chaos over which he now reigns. In years gone by, when Ministers recognised their responsibilities, the Minister of State would have resigned long ago.

The amendment is wholly irrelevant to the anxieties of many black and Asian people who view the Bill with great anger and resentment. If the Bill, particularly clause 5, is implemented robustly by the police, it will create very great difficulties in black and Asian communities throughout the country.

I am pleased that the chief constable in west Yorkshire clearly has not made any representations to the Home Office for the clause or the Bill to be introduced. Therefore, I am sure that it will not be implemented in west Yorkshire with the vigour that some of the extremists in the Conservative party would like. I hope that the police in the rest of the country, particularly in areas with black and Asian communities, will not use the legislation in the way that some Conservative Members would like them to implement it. I very much hope that powers in the Bill will not be taken up by the police. It should be quietly ignored. I fear that, if it is not, there will be a hot summer in many parts of the country. If that occurs, the responsibility will lie squarely with the Minister of State and the Home Office.

10.45 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Looking at the amendment, which we are supposed to be discussing and which is narrowly drawn, does the hon. Gentleman agree that to some extent it limits the Government's powers for prosecuting overstayers?

Mr. Madden: The unfortunate fact is not only that the amendment exists but that we also have the clause and the Bill.

I regret the Government's political will and determination to push through this dangerous legislation. They have shown no willingness to listen to those from the Churches, the voluntary agencies or the community organisations who have told them time and again that the legislation does not address itself to the real problems of black and Asian people throughout the country. It is a recipe for disharmony. It is a recipe for division, anger and resentment at a time when we need to bring communities together and build confidence between those communities and the police. My view of this legislation is shared by the vast majority of my colleagues on the Opposition Benches.

Question put and agreed.

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 3

PROVISIONS REGULATING THE CHARGES OF ALL WATER UNDERTAKERS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 3, line 47, at end insert—

"(4A) Subsection (6) of section 12 of the 1973 Act (right of statutory water company to reasonable return) shall apply in relation to the giving by the Secretary of State of a direction under subsection (4) above to a statutory water company as it applies to the settlement or variation of arrangements under that section."

10.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is designed to make it clear that the Secretary of State's power of direction under clause 3(4) does not prejudice the ability of statutory water companies to provide a reasonable return on capital, so long as they remain under their present financial framework. Clause 3(4), as drafted, requires water undertakers to comply with directions from the Secretary of State about the matters by reference to which their charges are fixed and the methods and principles to be adopted in calculating and imposing the charge.

During their discussions with my Department about the need for this reserve provision, the Water Companies Association pointed out that similar protection is already available to statutory water companies in section 12(6) of the Water Act 1973. That provision was inserted in the 1973 Act at the WCA's request, because of similar fears that the Secretary of State might settle or vary arrangements between water authorities and water companies which would affect their ability to provide a reasonable return on capital to their stock holders. Section 12(6) was in turn derived from the proviso to section 40(1) of the Water Act 1945. It also pointed out that, because investors have got used to seeing references to section 12(6) in the prospectuses of water companies, they will be looking for similar protection, and to have similar wording in this case.

I commend this technical but important amendment to the House.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): We agree with the amendment. It is a technical matter, but, as the Minister said, it is eminently sensible that the water companies should have the protection they are seeking. The Lords amendment clarified the position exactly.

I should like to ask the Minister one question so that his answer is on the record. It is the only thing about which we are concerned. Will he define for us what is meant by a "reasonable" return on capital? I understand that discussions on that matter have been taking place between the Government and the Water Companies Association. I have a copy of a letter from the association, signed by the director, Michael Swallow, saying that the association requested this amendment. We are happy that discussions have taken place, but would like to know what a reasonable return on capital means.

Mr. Moynihan: There have been lengthy debates on the Floor of the House and in Committee about the precise definition of "reasonable". There is a statutory restriction on the dividends of water companies. So anything below a statutory restriction—if it is imposed—would be deemed reasonable. That point was debated extensively in Committee and in the context of the 1973 Act, which gave no definition of "reasonable" It was left to common sense. The advantage here is the statutory restriction on the dividends of water companies, and a reasonable return on capital would be anything beneath that ceiling.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

METERING TRIALS SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 2 in page 5, line 34, at end insert "and with any bodies representing the interests of those persons".

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The Government gave an undertaking on Report that they would table a suitable amendment in another place in response to an amendment seeking to ensure that consumer bodies representing the interests of those affected by the trials were consulted. As a result of that undertaking, clause 4 was amended in the other place so that one of the matters to which the Secretary of State must have regard in considering whether to approve a metering trials scheme, in addition to consultation with those affected or likely to be affected by the scheme, which was the then position, should be consultation with any bodies representing their interests. Thus, consultation may be extended to include, for example, such bodies as the National Consumer Council, citizens advice bureaux and organisations such as local branches of the RNIB, Age Concern and Help the Aged. I stress that these are purely examples. It will be up to each undertaker to consider which bodies it would be appropriate to consult in each case, and for the Secretary of State to have regard to whether that consultation appears appropriate. This provides for a common-sense view, in all the circumstances, of which representative bodies it is reasonable to consult.

The amendment, by referring simply to bodies, rather than consumer bodies representing the interests of those persons affected by the scheme, goes wider than the amendment originally proposed by Opposition Members in the other place. That is because we felt that the term "consumer bodies" was imprecise, or, to put it another way, a bit woolly. Some important bodies, which the Government would expect water undertakers to consult, might not always fit such a description. An obvious example would be a local authority representing the interests of its tenants, or a social services client, resident in a trials area. Clearly, local authorities are not consumer bodies, but they represent—at least I hope they do—the interests of their tenants and social services clients.

The amendment is not complex, nor will it change the Bill in a radical way. However, it serves to emphasise the importance that the Government attach to full and proper consultation on the trials. I hope that it answers the

concerns that were expressed by Members of both Opposition parties represented in the House tonight and that we shall not disagree with the thrust of the amendment, which I recommend to the House.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I am sure that hon. Members on both sides will welcome the amendment, which was pressed on many occasions in Committee. It represents a substantial part of the case that we put forward. As such, we welcome it, and I am sure that the Labour party will do the same.

We still have serious concerns about the impact that metering may have on individuals and about differentials. I am a little sad that there has not been a further amendment to cover the point made about protection for individuals who may be worse off under the metering trials than if they had not been imposed on them. The Minister said that he would consider that point. This measure is a second-best, but it is welcome. I hope that the Minister will take advantage of the opportunity presented by any schemes that are proposed.

I represent one of the few boards that will not have metering trial schemes. People in my area are not entirely disinterested since, if the Government press ahead with the schemes, many will be directly affected. I hope that amendments along these lines will be viewed in similar terms when other proposals come before the House. The guarantees written into the Bill will apply to only a minority of the population—those involved in the schemes—but, if the schemes are extended, many more people will be worried about the possible effects of compulsory metering. I give a cautious welcome to the amendment. I am sure that there will not be opposition to it.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): There is no caution or hesitancy about my welcome for the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister has agreed to the amendment. He has shown a willingness to listen and an awareness of consumer interests.

As with Lords amendment No. 1, this amendment shows a willingness openly to review plans. I urge my hon. Friend to continue along this line and to listen to the advice of the statutory water companies, of one of which I am a director. Such companies offer a valuable service to the consumer and a valuable model. I ask my hon. Friend, before moving towards public limited companies, encircled by regulations in a monopoly supply situation, to consider the tried and tested model of the statutory water companies. Their dividend is limited by statute and all surpluses must be redirected towards the benefit of the consumer.

Mr. Boyes: We agree with the amendment, but in one way the Minister, in defining it, seemed to be giving with one hand and taking with the other. He paraphrased what the Earl of Caithness said, which was:

"It will be up to each undertaker to consider which bodies it would be appropriate to consult in each case, and for the Secretary of State to decide whether that consultation appeared appropriate."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 March 1988; Vol. 494, c. 1343.]

Surely, if various bodies decide that there should be consultation, I cannot understand why the Secretary of State wants to be involved. I do not know what some of the nationally recognised consumer organisations would think of the Minister describing the definitions as "woolly" when they have a good record on a number of issues.

On Third Reading, I described the Bill as "shoddy" and "undesirable". Although I welcomed the amendments, neither changes my opinion about the Bill. Throughout its passage, Labour Members continually bombarded the Minister and his colleagues with calls for more representation of consumer interests.

On 2 Febuary the Minister promised that he would table an amendment, but it is clear from reading the Committee proceedings that it was never in his mind to do so. We almost had to break off his arm and beat him with it to get him to move the amendment to give consumer associations a say in what is happening.

11 pm

To a casual observer, the amendment would appear to be a minor one, but its inclusion is a major concession by the Government to the arguments that we made on behalf of the nation's consumers. Consumer representation is not an insignificant issue to be tacked on to the Bill; it is the crux of the Bill.

I read the Committee proceedings in *Hansard* this morning and found at least a dozen references that I had made to consumers and their interests. My hon. Friends made similar contributions over the many hours that we spent considering the Bill. I shall give an example of what I said:

"We are anxious about the shabby way in which consumer councils have been treated . . . We cannot understand the Government's reluctance to accept our amendments".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 12 November 1987; c. 90.]

It has taken time and further deliberation for the Government to accept our point, but we are grateful that, even at this late stage, the amendment has been accepted.

Although the mechanism for consultation is welcome, there are vast injustices inherent in the terms of the Bill and its longer-term implications for the imminent privatisation of the whole water industry. For example, there is no balloting of consumers in trial areas, the trials are compulsory and the powers of right of entry have caused anxiety to many people.

I have visited different areas and talked to people about the water privatisation proposals. The one thing that is sticking in their gullets is that power is being given for water authorities to be able to kick somebody's front door down and fix a meter. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) might laugh, but he has not read the schedules to the Bill. Powers of entry are part and parcel of the Bill. People are aware of the nature of the Bill and of the Government who have introduced it.

We have consistently championed the cause of consumers during the passage of the Bill, and we made consumer interests the subject of our main new clause on Report. I am glad that the Government have taken to heart the need to consult consumers, but I fear that that is not because of a genuine concern for the well-being of those in the trial areas but a cynical desire to minimise the unpopularity of the trials and of water privatisation generally.

I remind the Minister of my final remarks in Committee. I said:

"I hope that we have persuaded some Conservative Members to reflect on our arguments. All constituents, whatever party they vote for, are consumers, and I hope that Conservative Members will consider supporting some of our amendments in the interests of the many consumers whom they represent."—[Official Report, Standing Committee B, *21 January 1988; c. 714.*]

[Mr. Boyes]

I am disappointed that only two amendments have come back from the other place. We moved a host of amendments that could have been considered by the other place that would have given the consumer and the people affected by the trials more rights than they have under the Bill.

If the Government cared what consumers thought they would have consulted them about whether a trial was wanted. That was the main issue throughout the Bill. Nevertheless, we accept the amendment because it will help to some degree. We regret that the other place was unable to help more, but we shall not divide the House on the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Weights and Measures

That the draft Weights and Measures (Knitting Yarns) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 12th April, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

PUBLIC PETITIONS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Standing Order No. 133 (No debate on presentation of petition) be left out and the following be inserted:

Time and manner of presenting petitions

133 (1)—Every petition presented under Standing Order No. 132 (Presentation of petitions) not containing matter in breach of the privileges of this House, and which according to the rules or usual practice of this House can be received, shall be brought to the Table—

(a) on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, after a Minister of the Crown shall have signified his intention either to move 'That this House do now adjourn', for the purpose of bringing the sitting to a conclusion, or to move, pursuant to Standing Order No. 10 (Sittings of the House (suspended sittings)) 'That the proceedings of this day's sitting be suspended', and

(b) on Fridays, at the commencement of public business;

Provided that petitions remaining to be presented at ten o'clock on a Friday on which private Members' bills have precedence under paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) shall stand over and may be brought to the Table after a Minister of the Crown shall have signified his intention to move 'That this House do now adjourn', for the purpose of bringing the sitting to a conclusion.

(2) Proceedings under paragraph (1)(a) and (1)(b) of this order shall not be interrupted at ten o'clock or at half-past two o'clock, respectively.

(3) Mr. Speaker shall not allow any debate, or any Member to speak upon, or in relation to, such petition; but it may be read by the Clerk if required.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Gaelic Language Broadcasting

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.6 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I very much welcome the opportunity to discuss in the House the need for a Gaelic broadcasting service, and I am delighted that it is the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) who is to reply. It is rather late, and I am sure that he would prefer to be on the beautiful island of Tiree, in my constituency, where he must surely by now have been adopted as a true Tirisdeach.

In the next few months, the Government promise to publish a major White Paper on broadcasting policy. It is suggested that it will contain many changes in terms of franchises, subscriptions, new cable services and satellite broadcasting. At the same time, as we move towards 1992, discussions are taking place on European Commission directives on broadcasting.

The purpose of this debate is to raise one vital issue, which must not be overlooked as we move towards what is likely to be a more deregulated and market-orientated broadcasting system. It is an issue which raises questions of consumer choice and the responsibilities of public service broadcasting. I am talking about broadcasting in the Gaelic language—an issue of great importance to more than 80,000 Gaels living in Scotland; an issue in which the Government must have an interest and one which I very much hope will not be ignored in the Government's White Paper.

The main issues I wish to highlight relate to television, but it is worth recording that there has been some expansion of Gaelic on both radio and, to a lesser extent, television in recent years. We have seen the creation by the BBC of a structure for Gaelic radio service, Radio Nan Gaidheal, which broadcasts five to 27 hours a week, but only a quarter of that is heard in central and southern Scotland, so 26,000 Gaels in Strathclyde do not get a full service.

However, the situation in television is different, and although there has been a slight increase in programming in the past few years on both BBC and the independent companies, to put it mildly, Gaels are less than happy about television, for it is crucial to the prospects of the language. We all know that television is the most significant means of communication for both information and entertainment. I do not pretend that access to television can alone guarantee the future of the Gaelic language, but exclusion from television would slow down its recovery. The advance of new technology means that more and more people are able to receive four colour channels, although some of the more remote parts of my constituency still have considerable problems.

There is tremendous potential, but potential which is not yet being exploited fully by the production companies. The average weekly Gaelic television output from all channels is less than one and a half hours. That is almost entirely current affairs programmes—Crann Tara and Prosbaig—and children's programmes. There is no arts, no sport, no religion, no light entertainment, and precious few documentaries. Gaelic programming is ad hoc and unco-ordinated. It is that situation which has led to Gaels calling for a Gaelic broadcasting service. We live in an

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

English-centred culture with endless hours of broadcasting in English. Particularly for those Gaels whose mother tongue is Gaelic, there is no choice.

What a difference it would make, for example, to have many more programmes on the Gaelic part of our literary heritage—to become familiar with the works of such great Gaelic poets as Alexander MacDonald and Duncan Bàn MacIntyre, to say nothing of the contemporary poet, Sorley MacLean, known in Gaeldom for his scholarly essays and poetry that has won him wide recognition as a great poet meriting international fame. His poems have been translated into Chinese, as well as most of the European languages. They have also been translated into English but I do not think they know much about him down here. People like him give the lie to any suggestion that we in Scotland are parochial and inward looking.

Previous Government reviews, in particular the Annan committee and the Peacock committee on the future financing of the BBC, have paid careful attention to the question of a Gaelic broadcasting service. The Peacock committee suggested:

"because of the anomaly by which the Scottish TV companies contribute more to maintaining the Welsh Fourth Channel than they spend on Gaelic television programmes in Scotland, a partial adjustment of their contribution to Wales should be considered".

In its recent evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, the Home Office recognised that the public service obligations of broadcasters included the notion that

"a suitable proportion of material should be calculated to appeal specially to the tastes and outlook of the persons served by the station including in languages other than English".

At a conference in 1985, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), when Secretary of State for Scotland, said:

"I quite accept that we want to keep on pressing for as much more of the air for those in the Gaelic speaking areas as we can".

In this House, there has been all-party support for the promotion of broadcasting in Gaelic. Three Bills were introduced in 1981, which called for the creation of a Gaelic broadcasting committee, consisting of representatives of the BBC and IBA, to co-ordinate and develop Gaelic television and radio; to oversee the scheduling of programmes in Gaelic; to comment and give guidance on the amount and balance of Gaelic broadcasting; to monitor the audience for Gaelic programmes; and to report to and advise the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I think that it is important to be clear what we are asking for. It is principally a framework for the development of Gaelic broadcasting, to allow better co-ordination of programme production and output, a commitment to a wider range of programmes, and more finance directed to the service provided. Currently Gaelic programmes appears to be ad hoc and seems to be seen in some quarters as an add-on extra.

An adequate service should extend to a wide range of programmes with regular time slots for specific programmes; they should not be shown in the middle of the night after all sane people have gone to bed. That happens all too often at the moment. There must be some commitment to real investment in the programmes.

Gaels look with some envy at the £3 million that annually leaves Scotland to fund the Welsh language channel S4C. I hasten to add that we do not object to that channel and we congratulate them on it. I hope that an extension of the levy principle to fund Gaelic programmes is something that the Government will consider when reflecting upon the funding of Channel 4.

Realistically, Gaels may not necessarily be looking for a separate channel like the Welsh. The proportion of Welsh speakers in Wales to Gaels in Scotland is significantly higher. The situations are different. But Gaels expect the Government to persuade the broadcasting companies of their public service obligations to Gaelic speakers. Tonight I hope that the Minister will be able to give me an assurance that this issue will be considered in the White Paper. I understand that that document is to be a broad-brush document, but the rights of minorities, the principle of consumer choice, and the concept of public service broadcasting are broad-brush issues that relate directly to the provision of a Gaelic broadcasting service.

What we are asking for is a commitment to the creation of a structure that allows Gaels an input to the provision of a co-ordinated service. Co-ordination between the broadcasting companies, the Home Office and the Scottish Office is the starting point. Up to now the Home Office position has been that, if Gaels are not pressing for a separate channel, they can be accommodated within existing broadcasting arrangements—the only issue being how successful they are in persuading the broadcasting companies of that point of view. Experience has shown that that has not been good enough.

The broadcasters, on the whole, have been sympathetic in principle, but I suspect that, unless the Government act to create a structure which will make the broadcasters co-operate, there is little prospect of change in the immediate future.

There are therefore two specific areas to which the Government should give some consideration in their White Paper: the concept of an overall framework, and the levy by Scottish TV companies to S4C and Channel 4.

There is some concern that moves towards deregulation, and, in particular, auctioning independent franchises to the highest bidder, might mean that minority interests are squeezed out, because they are not generating sufficient advertising interest, and that there will be a subsequent decline in the quality of programmes. Will the Minister give an assurance that the White Paper will entail a commitment, on the grounds of public service obligations and consumer choice, that all parts of the community are served?

The survival of the Gaelic language remains on a knife-edge. To lose it would be a tragedy not just for Scotland, but I believe for the United Kingdom and Europe. It has had a chequered career, surviving the infamous clearances, being downgraded and sneered at as the language of the ghillie. Children are forbidden to speak it in the school or the playground.

However, the long-drawn-out struggle to preserve and strengthen the language, culture and heritage goes on. Gaels are now responding with enterprise. For example, Bocsa-Beo—Living Box—which is Scotland's first independent Gaelic television company, was recently launched. There is a Gaelic video workshop called "New Vision". That shows that the Gaels are prepared to be enterprising.

Much work has been done by Comunn na Gaidhlig. It is at present drawing up a major policy document on a

Gaelic broadcasting service. I hope that the Minister will be able to meet Comunn na Gaidhlig later this summer when the document is published.

I am glad to have had this opportunity to state again the need for keeping alive our language in Scotland and, in particular, the need for a Gaelic broadcasting service.

11.18 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I thank the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) for allowing me a couple of minutes to support the sentiments that she has expressed.

I have three interests in the debate: first, as a native Gaelic speaker; secondly, a constituency interest; and, thirdly, the fact that the private Member's Bill to which the hon. Lady referred was introduced by my predecessor as Member of Parliament for Western Isles, Donald Stewart. That Bill contained a reference to the need to establish a Gaelic broadcasting committee to create a coherent policy framework for Gaelic broadcasting. The need for such a policy is even greater now than it was in 1981 when that Bill was introduced.

The hon. Lady said that Gaelic is on a knife-edge. But Gaelic is stronger than it was in 1981. Indeed, it is stronger than it has been for the past 100 years. Instead of a decline in interest, there seems to be an upsurge in interest and enthusiasm for the language, not just in my constituency but throughout Scotland. It is a fair reflection of that interest that the subject of Gaelic is no longer the sole preserve of the hon. Member for Western Isles, because Members representing other parts of Scotland are introducing such debates. That is a welcome and significant development.

The hon. Lady said that the main problem with Gaelic broadcasting is that, despite great advances, it remains ad hoc and fragmented. Sometimes programmes duplicate each other. That tends to hinder the development of Gaelic broadcasting. We must acknowledge the excellent work of those who pioneered Gaelic broadcasting, but, as the hon. Lady said, the time is right, with all the changes that are taking place in the broadcasting world in general, for a new look at the provision for Gaelic.

I urge the Minister to make a commitment and to say that the Government are considering a coherent policy framework for Gaelic. I hope that he will also give a commitment to meet representatives of the Gaelic language to discuss the need for a Gaelic broadcasting service.

11.21 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I thank the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) for introducing this interesting and important debate on the provision for broadcasting in the Gaelic language, and I also noted with great interest the remarks of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

I do not pretend to be an expert on Gaelic matters, and I would hesitate to say "Tirisdeach" with the flair and speed of the hon. Lady, but with a wife who comes from Ayrshire and having spent many holidays in Tiree in the hon. Lady's constituency, I have some small knowledge of the problems to which she referred. On Tiree, the older generations seem to prefer to speak Gaelic rather than English—at least among themselves—but there is not the same incentive or wish to speak Gaelic among the younger generation. That is why I was especially pleased the other day to hear my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for education in Scotland announce that the specific grant for Gaelic education will be increased from £300,000 this year to £500,000 in 1988-89.

The hon. Lady was right to say that Gaelic is an important part of Scottish heritage and culture and that, in turn, broadcasting has an important role to play in the preservation of Gaelic as a living language and in sustaining the distinctive culture upon which it is based. But I must remind the hon. Lady that Parliament has placed statutory obligations on the broadcasters in relation to minority interests. Our role is to ensure that the broadcasters meet the needs of all parts of the community, but it is the responsibility of the BBC and the IBA to consider the emphasis that should be given to Gaelic broadcasting, or to any other programme service. Decisions on the allocation of resources to services are matters in which the Government do not intervene.

The hon. Lady was more pessimistic about the Gaelic language than I am, and I was interested to hear that the hon. Member for Western Isles also thought that.

Certainly, Gaelic broadcasting on BBC Scotland television and radio aims to sustain and encourage the use of the Gaelic language as a means of transacting everyday life, of understanding and debating the widest range of public affairs—nationally and internationally—and of promoting contemporary Gaelic culture in the various communities of Scotland.

To achieve that, over 50 hours of television were broadcast in Gaelic last year by the BBC. Grampian Television plans to broadcast just over 40 hours of Gaelic programmes over the next 12 months and Scottish Television transmits about 26 hours of Gaelic programmes. Radio broadcasters already make real efforts to meet demand for Gaelic programmes. The BBC has been running Radio Nan Gaidheal for over three years as a distinctive radio service for the Gaelic-speaking population and, as the hon. Lady will know, it has steadily increased its hours of broadcasting and range of service.

I am sure that the BBC will take note particularly of the comments by the hon. Lady that there are 26,000 Gaels in the south of Scotland who cannot hear some of the radio programmes broadcast in Gaelic by the BBC, as well as her comments about the ad hoc and unco-ordinated nature of programmes.

I do not think that Gaelic as a language and culture is generally ignored by the broadcasting world, but, if it is felt that not enough attention is paid to it, those concerned, led perhaps by the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for the Western Isles, should seek to persuade the broadcasting authorities that greater coverage is needed.

The broadcasting authorities provide the service and, in fulfilling that function, they have to be sensitive to the various strands of public opinion. It must be recognised that, for any service to be provided, there must be a demand for that service. I am not persuaded, at this stage at least, that there is a demand for a Gaelic television service in the way that justified the creation of the Welsh fourth channel.

I understand the hon. Lady's concern about the subscription of about £3 million each year provided by the Scottish independent television companies towards the cost of the Welsh fourth channel, but I pointed out that all the ITV companies throughout the United Kingdom contribute in that way as part of the total package for

[Mr. Tim Renton]

establishing a Welsh language broadcast service and, indeed, of the fourth channel as a whole. Those contributions are taken into account in determining the ITV levy rates, and it is difficult to seek to change just one piece of the jigsaw in isolation.

When the Welsh fourth channel was reviewed in 1985, the ITV Association told the Government that the ITV companies supported in principle the continuation of the existing arrangements, and we concluded that the arrangements should continue. I do not think that it would be right at this stage to contemplate unpicking the package.

I wish to turn to future arrangements and the question of future opportunities for broadcasting through the introduction of new technology. Some of those might be in the form of new television services. Studies have been carried out into the feasibility of providing new services in the UHF and VHF bands. We have also been examining a technology new to this country—the microwave video distribution systems. That technology uses microwave frequencies to transmit television and sound channels from terrestrial transmitters to aerials on individual buildings. We have to make our own decisions about the new services and what form they might take, but new local specialist services are clearly a possibility.

We also envisage considerable scope for more Gaelic on radio in the future, if that is what listeners want. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, in his announcement of 19 January, confirmed that we propose to legislate on the basis of proposals put forward last year in our Green Paper. We shall invite Parliament to agree to establish a new radio authority which will be responsible for licensing a wide range of local services with the general aim of enhancing the range of choice for listeners. It will therefore be open to those interested in providing a Gaelic service, or at least one with a strong Gaelic flavour, to apply to the authority.

The stations that are then set up will not, as now, have to operate within all the constraints of the Broadcasting Act 1981. There will be no arbitrary limit on the number or range of stations that seek to address a Gaelic audience. The Radio Authority will take its licensing decisions on the basis of a number of considerations, and these will include the availability of frequencies, local demand for services and the extent to which they widen consumer choice.

I must suggest to the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Western Isles that advocates of Gaelic broadcasting may want now to make a start on getting their proposals worked out, thinking about business plans and establishing support within the community.

I hope that my reply is not too disappointing to the hon. Lady. She said that she is a realist and that she is not seeking a new television channel devoted exclusively to Gaelic. I agree with her realism. Despite the importance of preserving the language as part of the cultural heritage of Scotland, we do not feel that the level of demand for Gaelic broadcasting would justify the creation of a new television station in Scotland at this stage. However, there are major new opportunities for broadcasting both in television and on radio immediately ahead. I strongly urge the various interested parties in Scotland to consider those opportunities and to take advantage of the exciting developments.

At great risk, I say tapadh leibh to the hon. Lady. I thank her for raising this important subject and for the thoughtful and moderate way in which she has addressed the House this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 May 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.
Debate further adjourned till Thursday 12 May.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 May.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Wednesday 11 May at Seven o'clock.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second Time upon Thursday 12 May.

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 May at Seven o'clock.

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 May.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (BARROW) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

British Poultry Federation

1. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the British Poultry Federation; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the British Poultry Federation today at the lunch following the federation's annual general meeting. They discussed a number of issues of interest to the industry.

Mr. Alexander: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, which was not quite as foul as I had expected. Will he congratulate the industry on the way in which it has managed to achieve considerable success without assistance from the EEC?

Mr. Thompson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend mentioned that at lunch today. It is remarkable that industries, such as the poultry industry which receive least do best. We assist with export refunds and in as many other ways as possible. I shall be visiting the European poultry fair at Stoneleigh on the 18th of this month.

Mr. Hunter: In discussions with the British Poultry Federation, will my hon. Friend draw attention to the fact that prices to the producer are dropping at a far greater rate than those to the consumer? Surely that is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. Will my hon. Friend comment on the matter?

Mr. Thompson: Market forces will always find their own level. I am sure that the producers and the retailers who are in a very strong position at present, constantly argue this out between themselves.

Hill Farming

2. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current level of average income in the hill farming sector.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The latest information on the incomes of hill and upland livestock farms is shown in tables 30, 31 and 32 of the White Paper on the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1988"—Cm. 299—and, in more detail, in the recent publication "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Kennedy: I thank the Minister for that comprehensive answer. Following the Brussels summit in February and the decisions or actions initiated there on price stabilisers, particularly for sheep, there is bound to be some anxiety in marginal agriculture areas, such as my constituency in the Highlands of Scotland, about long-term trends in the sheep sector. Will the Government carefully bear in mind the long-term concerns in areas such

as the Highlands when reaching or implementing domestically any decisions that follow from European decisions?

Mr. Gummer: I have recently spent some time in the mountainous areas of Wales, which have similar problems. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will accept that we keep the matter under close consideration, because those areas rely particularly on sheep for their income and we shall be taking them into consideration in the coming review of the sheepmeat regime. However, the forecast for the 1987-88 accounting year suggests a reasonably healthy rise in incomes for such farms in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: Will my right hon. Friend accept that little could be more damaging to the hill sheep producer than a set-aside programme which encourages people to go into livestock, notably sheep, on the lowland? Will he exercise the option that he will have when he draws up his set-aside programme to make sure that while safari parks with camels or lions may be put on set-aside land, sheep are not.

Mr. Gummer: I am not sure that I wish to encourage camels on such land either, but the matter that my hon. Friend raises is important and we are trying to reach a decision on that in the set-aside arrangements. People are obviously considerably worried if they feel that others are supported in a way that they are not to produce something in areas where other opportunities exist. That is obviously a matter of great importance, on which my right hon. Friend will have something to say later.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What about the shortfall in income for hill sheep farmers in Cumbria and other parts of the United Kingdom as a result of Chernobyl? Is the Minister aware that 66 farmers in Cumbria believe that they are owed £172,000 by Her Majesty's Government for damage arising from the Chernobyl incident? Does he not think it unreasonable that an accident that took place thousands of miles away in the Soviet Union should be paid for by my constituents and other farmers in the county? I recognise that there have been many discussions over the past year, but can he, even at this late stage, help us out?

Mr. Gummer: We have looked carefully at all the individual claims. There is no doubt that in any system some will fall outside the guidelines, whether on Chernobyl or any other matter. If the hon. Gentleman wants to do something about Chernobyl, he might ask his hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) to stop stirring up worries and anxieties over Chernobyl on matters that do not exist and never have existed.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that hill farming is a hard-pressed section of the industry? Does he accept that the environmentally sensitive area programme has been a great success? Is there any hope of extending that programme, so that more farmers can avail themselves of management agreements in difficult highland areas?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right in saying that the implementation of the first, and now the second, set of ESA proposals has been a success, but they are an experimental series of areas from which we must learn. It would be a mistake to suggest that we could now decide on extensions. However, we are obviously learning all the time from the wide range of areas concerned, and if we find that it is sensible to extend them, no doubt we shall do so.

Dr. David Clark: When the Minister looked at the tables of average incomes in the upland areas, did he notice that some of the incomes were very low indeed? Will he take seriously the point raised by my hon. Friend for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)? Does he accept that in some cases in Cumbria and Wales those low incomes were affected by the shortfall in Chernobyl payments? Is he aware that I wrote to his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at the end of March suggesting that we should appoint local adjudicating committees to look at all the cases to find a reasonable and fair solution to the problem?

Mr. Gummer: We have tried hard throughout to look at those cases as carefully as possible and to give them the compensation to which they are entitled. A further look at the same cases will not make any difference. I repeat that I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take on his shoulders the serious responsibility that he bears in trying to frighten people in areas where no fears need to be raised.

Grain

3. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about arrangements for the release of grain held in United Kingdom surplus stores.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I continue to receive representations about the current arrangements for the release of grain held in intervention.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that storage is now one of the most profitable sectors of British agriculture? Does he think that the tendering procedures for taking grain out of store are adequate to overcome the natural reluctance of store owners to relinquish their source of income?

Mr. MacGregor: We are continually examining the storage arrangements to ensure that we get value for money. The real point is not about releasing grain from intervention stores, but that, under the Community rules adopted last year, Commission agreement is required for sales of grain from intervention on to the domestic market. We opposed those new rules when they were introduced, but we have them. There is no point in making intervention grain available, because, under Community rules, it cannot be sold at a price lower than the buying-in price and market prices are currently well below that level.

Mr. Ralph Howell: What does my right hon. Friend consider to be the world market price for milling and other wheat?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have the precise figures, but I suspect that my hon. Friend is saying that the world market price can change. It depends on the surpluses that exist and the subsidy that is going in from not only the Community, but the United States and elsewhere, to reach a world market price. That is a difficult figure to estimate, but if we get the surpluses under control the world market price will not necessarily be where it is today.

Mr. Tony Banks: If the Minister cannot answer that question, perhaps he can answer this one. How much is it costing to keep the grain in intervention stores?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it plain many times that the costs are too high. The costs are about £12·5 billion a year for all intervention stores. That is not just the cost of storage, but the cost of disposing of the surpluses. That is why we took such a strong line in the negotiations for CAP reform that we have successfully carried through to deal with that problem. I have always made it clear that we must reduce those costs.

Farming (Extensification)

4. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to introduce a scheme to de-intensify United Kingdom farming.

Mr. Gummer: The Council of Ministers has recently adopted a measure requiring member states to introduce extensification schemes providing incentives for farmers to reduce output of surplus agricultural products. We shall not be able to determine how extensification should be applied in the United Kingdom until detailed Commission rules have been established.

Sir John Farr: Although I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer, does he agree that there is much to be said for a regime in farming as an option that encourages farmers to put less in and extract less from their land? That would solve the problem of excess application of nitrates and the many other problems that are associated with intensive farming.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The extensification schemes may play an important role. However, the problems of policing and the difficulties of ensuring that money from the taxpayer is not given to people who continue to over produce are very serious. I hope my hon. Friend will accept that it will take a little time to overcome those difficulties.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Does the Minister agree that the Government must be careful before introducing such a scheme? Last year many hon. Members on both sides of the House suggested that we should have quotas for beef production. The Minister will be aware that there is now a shortage of beef in Britain and in other countries.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman, with his great knowledge of farming, underlines the problem that it is impossible to know from one year to the next what beef production will be. We know that there is a major underlying trend of increasing yields in the production of livestock. We also know that all sorts of international complications can change the suggested amounts for next year. The hon. Gentleman will agree that an extensification scheme that might allow people to farm less intensively—where that seems sensible—would be helpful, if we could find one that worked.

Sir Richard Body: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we made a good start in this respect by introducing ESAs under the Agriculture Act 1986? Should we not press ahead with more such schemes as fast as we reasonably can?

Mr. Gummer: It is a very good start, but these are experimental areas. Each of them has peculiarities. We are trying to see how the system works best. When we evaluate how the ESAs have worked over the next two or three years, we shall be in a better position to make the decision that my hon. Friend would like. I remind him that just a year ago we had only half as many ESAs. We have doubled that number already, and also the amount of money that we are spending on them.

Mr. Win Griffiths: We welcome these first measures and recognise the grave problems of implementing the schemes, but are not the pollution problems, which are equally severe, likely to cause as grave problems? Will the Government give a firm commitment that they will do more to tackle the problems of pollution in rural areas?

Mr. Gummer: I have made it clear in recent speeches and in the actions that we have taken that we deplore pollution by the farming community. This community is taking action, and more and more people will realise how important the issue is. Last year was a difficult one for pollution because of the weather, but I do not think such incidents are justifiable, and we must get a better record.

Public Houses (Tenancy System)

6. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the east midlands on the tenancy system in public houses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A number of hon. Members have written to me concerning the situation of tenants of Home Brewery plc. I have also met delegations of hon. Members and representatives of the National Licensed Victuallers Association to hear their views on the application of the Brewers Society code of practice on tenants' security in this and other cases.

Mr. Allen: The Minister will be aware, because he has seen other hon. Members and me, that the Scottish and Newcastle brewery has taken over the Home brewery in Nottingham, with the consequence that up to 300 tenants have been issued with either notice to quit or up to fivefold rent increases. Will the Minister make representations so that the tenants and Scottish and Newcastle will get around the table, and the latter will behave in a decent way towards those tenants?

We are also worried about the future of the Daybrook brewery in Nottingham, and the assurances that Scottish and Newcastle has given us may not be worth the paper they are written on. Matthew Brown's brewery in Workington—*[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members do not like to hear that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to put his question briefly. This is not an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Thompson: If I did not before—and I did—I now recognise the passion that the hon. Gentleman brings to this issue. I met him, my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and other hon. Members, and the National Licensed Victuallers Association. After that meeting I wrote to the Brewers Society outlining the events of the meeting and asking it to look at the matter carefully.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend will be aware that there are considerable reservations in the licensed trade about the

way in which the Brewers Society's code of guidance on tenants' security is operating in practice. As he will know, there are two alternatives. One is to give the code of practice statutory backing; the other is to make publicans subject to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. Which of those alternatives does he favour, if he feels that a change is required?

Mr. Thompson: I suggest that the tenants, through their associations, press the breweries to stick more closely to the code of practice, and that my hon. Friend, if he thinks it appropriate, introduces a measure to codify that code of practice in legislation. It is not for me to do that at this time or to encourage the landlords and tenants to move to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What are we going to do about this company, which rides roughshod over the livelihoods of people throughout the United Kingdom wherever it is allowed to operate? May we have an official inquiry of some sort into Scottish and Newcastle's divestment of its shares in MacKinleys in Scotland and into the jobs lost in Scotland? Such an inquiry will reveal once again the irregular and unreasonable way in which the company operates.

Mr. Thompson: The pressure of market forces does not always work in the direction of tenants, landlords or brewers. I do not think that the sort of inquiry envisaged by the hon. Gentleman would be sensible, or clear, if it were set up in the way that he suggests.

Bananas

7. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the price of bananas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The price of bananas is a matter for the market, but my Department receives a variety of views on the subject, depending on market circumstances.

Mr. Sackville: Is my hon. Friend not aware that, historically, we have paid the highest prices for bananas in Europe and have the lowest consumption, mainly because of our bilateral agreements with Jamaica and other producers? Does he not agree that if we are to go on helping our Commonwealth friends in this way by paying over the world price the responsibility should fall on our trade and aid budget and not on the household budgets of families such as mine, who are very partial to bananas?

Mr. Thompson: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is a month late. On 31 March we introduced a new system whereby dollar bananas would be able to be introduced to Britain at a minimum level. That system will also safeguard traditional suppliers to whom bananas are most important and for whom they are a great source of income. My hon. Friend mentioned aid. My hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) made sure that the Caribbean islands received about £4 million of aid last year, plus aid from the European Community, the World Bank and the Caribbean Bank, to which we were contributors. If bananas can produce so many fast bowlers, perhaps we could have them cheaper in Yorkshire as well.

Pigmeat

8. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the competitive position of British pigmeat producers.

Mr. MacGregor: In recent weeks the pigmeat market appears to have stabilised and the United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts have fallen from minus 10·9 per cent. to minus 4·9 per cent.

Mr. Tredinnick: Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on the impact of current MCA levels on imported pigmeat and bacon? Is he satisfied that the British slaughtering industry is sufficiently prepared for the single European market in 1992?

Mr. MacGregor: The whole of industry has to make sure that it is sufficiently prepared for 1992, and many industries have a lot to do in that respect. In answer to my hon. Friend's first point, our domestic market shares have been holding up, but the important point is that the recent drop in the MCAs has meant that the subsidy per tonne of imported bacon side has fallen from £69 to £31 in the last few weeks. In so far as the MCAs are having an effect, it is much reduced. In the debate after Question Time I shall have more to say about pigmeat MCAs.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Given that there is a slight improvement, is the Minister satisfied that the pig industry is out of the crisis that it has faced over the past few months? Does he recall that in 1983, in a similar situation, 12 per cent. of the United Kingdom's pig breeding stock was lost? Is he satisfied that that will not happen again?

Mr. MacGregor: I have to make clear that it is not a slight improvement in MCAs. At the peak in February last year MCAs were nearly minus 28 points and now they are below minus 5. That is a considerable change. I am well aware of the pressures that the pig industry is facing. We are in a cycle in which supply is exceeding demand and, in a market such as the pigmeat market, that creates problems for producers.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the British pig industry is further disadvantaged by the Dutch pig industry, which makes extensive use of manioc imports? Pelleted manioc imported into Holland carries a levy of 28 per cent. and the levy on the raw material is 6 per cent. Is he aware of allegations that the Dutch are importing pelleted manioc and paying only the 6 per cent. levy? Is my right hon. Friend's Ministry prepared to look at this?

Mr. MacGregor: We may if we wish use manioc in this country, but naturally the Dutch have advantages in their ports and in the ease of access at their ports for their producers. I have been looking into the point raised by my hon. Friend and the Customs directorate of the European Commission is investigating it. It is a fairly technical point and perhaps I could write to my hon. Friend about it. I do not think that it makes any difference to the present position of our pig industry.

Woodland Grant Scheme

9. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes to

meet representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss the woodland grant scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no arrangements at present to meet representatives of the National Farmers Union for the specific purpose of discussing the woodland grant scheme.

Mr. Jones: Is the Minister aware that farmers who take part in the woodland grant scheme will be at a disadvantage with the planting of conifers, because if they plant less than 50 per cent. of conifers they will not be able to claim the planting grants, while farmers outside the scheme who plant 100 per cent. of conifers will able to claim on the whole figure?

Mr. MacGregor: Some changes have been made to the woodland grant scheme to deal with conifers, which are environmentally more acceptable in some parts of the country than in others and have been welcomed by some people. However, overall, the woodland grant scheme fully compensates for the changes in the tax regime, because the support from the Exchequer, whether in tax forgone or in grants for planting, remains unchanged. The woodland grant scheme as now conceived is better than the previous one.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in Sussex and many parts of Kent, of far greater importance than a woodland grant scheme is the introduction of a clearance scheme so that people can clear the woods and go ahead with replanting?

Mr. MacGregor: If my hon. Friend is referring to the costs of storm damage clearance, he will know that we have received a full report on the matter and a report from the Select Committee. I hope, before too long, to be able to respond to those reports.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Does the Minister agree that there should be far more emphasis on planting woodlands, both under this scheme and under the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill? As about 15 per cent. of our land is producing 50 per cent. more food than we need, there is a need for massive diversification into woodland. Does not the scheme need to be doubled, trebled or even increased tenfold over the next five years?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope the hon. Gentleman will have noticed how, under this Government, private landowners have increased their planting. As he said, that is the purpose of the Bill that will come before the House for its final stages this evening. We have been taking a number of initiatives, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give his full support to the Bill.

Mr. Ian Bruce: May we have an assurance that the excellent knowledge and expertise in the Forestry Commission will be used to advise farmers so that they do not go headlong into long-term investment and perhaps make many mistakes which the commission could prevent? Will my right hon. Friend encourage the National Farmers Union and the Forestry Commission to discuss such matters?

Mr. MacGregor: The Forestry Commission is available for both encouragement and advice. Under schemes that qualify for grants farmers must go to the Forestry Commission, and will therefore receive advice. My hon. Friend will know that we have been stepping up the advisory capability of ADAS to meet that objective.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the Minister meets representatives of the National Farmers Union, will he discuss with them the practice that has apparently been developing over the past couple of years whereby the Government approve for planting more than double the hectareage provided for within their own targets? Does that mean that expenditure on the forestry industry is not cash limited?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not aware of the problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers and I shall have to look into it, but, within our provision, we hope that there will be full take-up of these grants, although we must apply budgetary disciplines.

Farm Diversification Scheme

10. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest position on the introduction of the farm diversification scheme.

Mr. Gummer: Farmers have responded enthusiastically to the introduction of capital grants for farm diversification. Since the scheme started on 1 January this Ministry has received about 388 applications covering a wide range of investments. We plan to introduce soon related grants for feasibility studies and marketing under powers being sought under the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill which we will discuss this evening.

Mr. Kirkhope: Will my right hon. Friend consider placing greater emphasis on assistance to enterprises on the fringes of urban centres, such as my constituency of Leeds, North-East? Is he not disappointed that a larger number of applications have not been received for activities involving horses, bearing in mind my interest in those activities in Yorkshire?

Mr. Gummer: I bear in mind my hon. Friend's interests in these activities, but I am not disappointed in the level of applications, because we have received a great number and wide range of them in a short time. I take my hon. Friend's point, but one of the problems that we must sort out in the urban fringes is how best to apply the planning arrangements to protect the environment, while at the same time providing people with an opportunity to diversify.

Mr. Wells: Will my right hon. Friend consider extending the farm diversification scheme to those who benefit under the banana agreement referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), in view of his obvious antipathy to that programme? Is it not true that, under that programme, the consumption of bananas in this country has been increasing by 4 per cent. per annum?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am trying to relate this to the original question.

Mr. Wells: It relates to the farm diversification scheme. I am asking my right hon. Friend whether the scheme should be extended to other producers of bananas, who will have to diversify if banana imports decline.

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that there is any opportunity for the Government to extend the scheme to

the Caribbean islands. The consumption of bananas is increasing, and should continue to do so. It is reasonable that some of those bananas should come from other developing countries that produce them. We must protect those with whom we have a long-standing agreement and understanding, but I do not see why some of the expansion should not benefit the other poorer countries.

Farming (Extensification)

14. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he proposes to publish further details of his proposals for an extensification scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Following the decisions of the European Council in February, the Agriculture Council has now agreed separate schemes for set-aside and for extensification. The Commission has recently adopted the detailed rules for set-aside. An announcement will be made as soon as possible on the detailed arrangements to apply in the United Kingdom. Introduction of a scheme for extensification will depend on further Commission rules, which have yet to be proposed.

Mr. Haynes: There are proposals about the production of food, and whether too much or too little is being produced, but what about the protection of wildlife? We want protection for the birds, the bees, the weasels, the squirrels and the rabbits, and if we do not get it, the Minister will be looking for protection.

Mr. Gummer: I know how close the protection of rabbits and weasels is to the heart of the hon. Gentleman, and I am sure he will be pleased to know that in the environmentally sensitive areas we have taken a number of opportunities to find ways in which this protection can be extended, not least with the strip system, which is being used in Breckland. Great care will be taken to ensure that the set-aside scheme is environmentally satisfactory. The hon. Gentleman will also understand that since the passing of the Agriculture Act 1986 the Ministry has had a duty to take into account the environmental impact of its decisions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In coming to a decision on whether, under the set-aside scheme, farmers should leave their land fallow or be allowed to use it for grazing, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the grave concern among farmers in Pembrokeshire and in west Wales that they will be put at a grave disadvantage if farmers receiving grants can then use the land for stock grazing and undercut prices?

Mr. Gummer: I assure my hon. Friend that we are taking closely into account the representations that we have received in deciding how the scheme should apply to the United Kingdom. It is obviously of great concern for those who can do little other than use their land for grazing if others who have a range of opportunities are encouraged by support to move into grazing of livestock. On the other hand, the opportunity for grazing fallow is there, and we shall have to consider it most carefully.

Common Agricultural Policy

15. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the extent to which the common agricultural policy at present gives British farmers the opportunity to compete on equal terms with their counterparts in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As the Commission document on the price-fixing makes clear, it is very difficult to assess equal terms between member states, since so many factors vary.

Mr. Howells: Is this not an opportune time to have an independent inquiry into the workings of the common agricultural policy, to see whether British farmers are able to compete on equal terms with their counterparts in Europe?

Mr. MacGregor: We have had inquiries on some aspects of the CAP. For example, an inquiry into pigmeat came to the view that, with the possible exception of the MCA issue—the hon. Gentleman knows my position on this—overall the costs were similar and that it was not possible to suggest that British farmers were in an uncompetitive position. I do not believe that a general inquiry is required. It is always my aim to ensure that, on matters of Commission or national confidence, British farmers compete on reasonably fair terms. I shall have more to say about that in our debate later.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is becoming extremely difficult and embarrassing explaining and justifying to British pig farmers the commonality of an agricultural policy and market in which they seem to be diminishing in number at regular, cyclical intervals? Will he do something to underpin the British pig industry more successfully than we have managed to do so far?

Mr. MacGregor: Pig production has held up pretty well in this country, and we are maintaining our market share. I have made clear on a number of occasions that I should like to see MCAs eliminated.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Minister aware of the precarious position of the pig industry in Northern Ireland, which has been decimated over the past decade, from a total of 24,000 producers to only 4,000? While we welcome the movement that he announced earlier on MCAs, will he strive to lift that burden from those who are trying to compete with northern Europe, where producers receive a subsidy of £50 to £70 per tonne? Will the Minister consider also increasing the export restitution, to enable an expanded market to be created in the third world?

Mr. MacGregor: We have considered export restitutions and pressed for them on a number of occasions. There have been a number of significant changes over the past six months, and the hon. Gentleman will realise that they are available to farmers in the European Community as a whole, not just to those in the United Kingdom. I have made it clear that the subsidy to which the hon. Gentleman referred has been considerably reduced during the past few weeks. It is my objective to have pigmeat MCAs eliminated altogether, although that will be difficult to achieve.

Farming Unions

16. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last had a meeting with the leaders of the farming unions; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I meet the leaders of the farming unions frequently to discuss agricultural matters.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that farmers are very grateful for the stand that he takes in representing their interests? Will he please do all that he can to ensure early devaluation of the green pound, so that our farmers are paid as much as German farmers are for indentical produce?

Mr. MacGregor: In our current discussions in the Council on price fixing I have taken the view that we should take a further step towards devaluation of the green pound. I hope to say more about that in the debate this evening.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one of the complaints that he will receive from British farming unions —and if he met the agricultural workers union he would hear the same—is that on the continent the £2 billion fraud under the common agricultural policy during the past two years has meant that British farmers have not been able to compete effectively? Can he throw any light on the fiddle set-aside scheme, which has not yet been introduced, but which, according to sources within the Community, involves a figure approaching 50 per cent.?

Mr. MacGregor: I find it difficult to understand how there can be a fiddle under a scheme that has not been introduced.

Whales

19. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to promote the conservation of whales.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are in the forefront of recent efforts within the International Whaling Commission to ensure that the moratorium on commercial whaling, which came into effect in 1985, is fully respected. We recently ensured that the scientific committee condemned Japanese attempts to use scientific excuses for whaling and it has asked them to stop. We shall continue to fight to ensure that the whale is conserved.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. Friend find time to wait upon the Japanese representatives currently visiting this country, to pass on to them a guide to and examples of, good practice, and the way in which the British Government have dealt with the problem, and ask them to follow suit?

Mr. Gummer: I shall certainly look into that, and, if it proves possible, point out that the British Government's campaign has had full support from International Greenpeace and from Sir Peter Scott and the organisations that he represents.

Common Agricultural Policy

20. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action he is taking to seek to reform the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I am seeking to ensure that the approach adopted on CAP reform at the recent European Council is followed through in the price fixing. I favour adjustments to support arrangements which will bring supply and demand into better balance and restore intervention to its original role as a safety net rather than an alternative market outlet.

Mr. Wilshire: As every citizen is a consumer of agricultural products but few earn their living from agriculture, will my right hon. Friend give higher priority to the wish of consumers for lower prices, rather than the high prices that we now have?

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's record on food prices is very good. The average is well below what it was under the last Labour Administration, and is below the rate of inflation. I think that the problem is much more the contribution that the taxpayer has to make in ways that are not a sensible use of economic resources, and it is on that that we are concentrating.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Hungary.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Prime Minister aware that I have received a letter from a widow in my constituency, in the beautiful village of Selston? Before 11 April she was receiving housing benefit. She has now been told that she is no longer entitled to it, and she is struggling to find food. I hope that that point has gone home. Because of the policies of the Government and the Prime Minister, I believe that she is a wicked woman and that they are a wicked Government.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must think terrible things of the previous Labour Government, bearing in mind that this Government are spending far more than that Government did on social security and on housing benefit, and that there is a far higher standard of living. What a pity that he did not ask his own Front Bench—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the question. Hon. Members have a much better Government than they have ever had before.

Q2. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Page: As some of the television companies are indulging in trial by television before the legal processes are completed, will my right hon. Friend consider

strengthening the guidelines by which those companies are controlled? Will she consider whether they are the right companies to project the balance that will be necessary when the House is televised?

The Prime Minister: Televising the House is being considered by a Select Committee, and that Committee will no doubt wish to make its own recommendations for the House to decide. As for trial by television, it is not so much the actual specific rules on which we depend. It has been something much deeper than that. It has been a matter of the customs and conventions referred to by Lord Justice Salmon in his report, in which he said:

"One would not wish to see in this country the horror of trial by Press, Television and Radio . . . We have so far escaped them only because of the high sense of responsibility on the part of Press, Television and Radio".

It is that high sense of responsibility that does not seem to be here now. Lord Justice Salmon went on to say, andthis is vital:

"The real danger of such interviews is that witnesses whose evidence is vital to the matters under investigation are questioned without any of the safeguards which obtain in our courts of law or before Tribunals of Inquiry."

One of the proudest bastions of liberty is that the rule of law is inviolate. That is what is at stake.

Mr. Kinnock: In her letter to me this week the Prime Minister said:

"what matters is the total income of individual people from benefit"

I agree with that, but how does the right hon. Lady respond to a 76-year-old widow who says—*[Interruption.]* All hon. Members will have received many similar letters. They had better listen to the Prime Minister's answer, because they will need it.

The widow says:

"My only income is my pension . . . I was due in April for a £1·30 rise which would bring my income to £44·68 but now I have to pay £1·68 rates which brings me off a little worse . . . I have to put £25 a week away for bills—electricity, gas, life insurance, house insurance, ground rent, water rates, telephone and TV licence.

This leaves £18 a week to live on, which isn't much fun.

All my home is getting worn out, like me, and cannot be replaced. By the way, I have got £400 in the bank but dare not break into it as it is for my funeral."

As it is obvious that thousands of people are in a similar position, will the Prime Minister change her social security and poll tax policies again in order to remove the 20 per cent. rates liability for people such as that widow?

The Prime Minister: No. If the lady is within income support, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, there is full transitional protection. He is very well aware of that. For a start, those people are the poorest in our society. As he knows, widows will greatly benefit from the community charge, as they will pay a lot less than they would have done under the rates system that he wishes to support.There is an 80 per cent. rebate for those who are poor, and those on income support will receive a sum equal to about 20 per cent. of the average rate to enable them to pay either their rates or, later on, their community charge.

Mr. Kinnock: The lady in question lives in a borough where the average rate is lower than the outer London average, and lower than the national average. I know that the right hon. Lady takes notice of her own mailbag. She must know that the average rate in her constituency is £678 a year. A 20 per cent. average liability is therefore £137·40, which is £2·64 a week. To offset that 20 per cent. rates liability, the DHSS pays £1·30 a week. How does £1·30 a week offset £2·64 a week?

The Prime Minister: If there is an average payment, obviously some people will do very much better and some people will not get as much. The right hon. Gentleman is perfectly well aware of that. He will bring forward one or two losers and forget all the gainers. He will know from the latest figures that the highest domestic rate in this country is 329p, in Bolsover, and the lowest is 98p, in Kensington.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister does not understand her own system. The DHSS provides £1·30 a week towards the extra liability that people have to meet 20 per cent. of the rates liability, wherever they live. Will she tell me how somebody on an income of just over £44 a week is not worse off as a consequence of having to meet that liability? When someone gets £1·30 a week extra, is she a loser or a gainer when she has to pay £2·64 a week extra for rates? Will the Prime Minister please try to understand the situation of the thousands of people in that position, including those in her own constituency, who have somehow to meet their 20 per cent. rates liability of £2·64 a week out of an extra £1·30 a week?

The Prime Minister: I have answered the right hon. Gentleman. It is he who refuses to understand that if there is an average sum to meet a particular liability, some people will get more than the liability and a few people will get less. Is he suggesting that because sometimes there are losers there should never be any changes? If that is so, why did his Government introduce fair rents, when everyone had to pay increased rents over controlled rents? Why did his Government change the basis of the pension uprating when it did not suit them to compensate pensioners for price increases, and every pensioner lost?

Mr. Benyon: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the grave concern that many of us feel at what appears to be French capitulation to terrorism, and will she convey this disquiet to the French Premier?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, our policy on hostages has not changed. We do everything that we can to inquire about them and to persuade those who hold them that it is totally wrong to do so and that they should be released unconditionally. We will not pay a ransom or make any payment of that sort to obtain the release of hostages. We have asked the French Government about the matter, and they have assured us that they have not paid a ransom.

Q3. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell the House whether the ability of British manufacturers to export competitively plays any part in determining her policy towards the appropriate level of the sterling exchange rate, or is it only the Chancellor who is interested in British exporters?

The Prime Minister: We are all interested in British exporters and, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, we have to import many raw materials and semi-fabricated

products in order to export the finished product. Of course, imports under a high exchange rate are much cheaper than they would otherwise be.

Q5. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stewart: Now that winter is over and our thoughts are turning to our summer holidays, has my hon. Friend considered taking her vacation in the new Center Parcs holiday village in Sherwood forest? Since that new complex opened, 250,000 visitors have attended and paid entrance and holiday fees. The complex employs 450 people. Does my right hon. Friend agree that tourism is the easiest way forward in creating new jobs?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that tourism creates a great many jobs and brings a considerable income to this country. I confess that I had not thought of spending my own holiday at that place, but I hope that many other people will do so.

Mr. Mallon: Given the Prime Minister's belief that recent television programmes produced by Thames Television and the BBC may be prejudicial to the findings of the inquest in Gibraltar, will she express similar concern at the decision of the Attorney-General not to prosecute senior police officers who were involved in similar incidents in the North of Ireland? Does she agree that that must be grossly prejudicial to the inquiries there? Does she further agree that the unprecedented delay of six years in holding inquests into those incidents must lead us to the conclusion that a just and equitable decision is not now possible?

The Prime Minister: No, I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. As he is well aware, the Attorney-General's decision was made in accordance with the due and proper process of law, which, he explained to the House. That is quite different from trial by television.

Mr. Gorst: Will my right hon. Friend say whether it would be the intention of the Government, in setting up the Broadcasting Standards Council, to refer to it matters such as the programme on the shootings in Gibraltar and the BBC's programme, "Spotlight", if it transmits it?

The Prime Minister: That had not been the intention. As my hon. Friend is aware, we agreed to set up a Broadcasting Standards Council more to deal with violence and matters of that sort. I would prefer to think that we could rely on the television authorities to uphold the rule of law, which, after all, is the fundamental safeguard of the freedom of us all. One cannot agree with the rule of law and then flout its conditions. I hope that we will be able to persuade them that that is the predominant issue.

Q6. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: Why is the Prime Minister, who is wealthy beyond the bounds of ordinary people's wealth, so callous and merciless with the old and the poor? Can she explain to the people outside why all this money is going to the powerful and wealthy, when it should be going to the needy, the sick and the old? How can she reconcile that with having a conscience of any kind?

The Prime Minister: Lower rates of taxation have led to far higher incomes, to far higher standards of social services and in the Health Service than we have ever known, and to far higher living standards for widows and pensioners than they have ever known, as all the figures show. The high taxation regime run by Opposition Members led to big cuts in the social services and the Health Service. The hon. Gentleman will never understand the means by which wealth is created and the means by which extra money can be passed on to those in need. It is noteworthy that Opposition Members voted against cuts in income tax. Their votes would have cut the net take home pay of many people on quite low incomes.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents fully support her in the support that she invariably gives to our security services, whose members preserve our lives? Is she further aware that they also believe that if convicted terrorists were executed, they could not escape to kill again.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend knows my personal view on capital punishment. This is a matter for the House as a whole to decide, and I believe that there will one day be an occasion when the House can consider it again.

P and O Dispute

3.30 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest developments in the P and O dispute.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): The dispute continues, but I understand that P and O are operating the Pride of Kent and the Pride of Bruges between Dover and Zeebrugge.

Unlawful secondary action and picketing have interrupted the operation of a number of ferries owned by other British companies. As a consequence, in an action brought by Sealink, the National Union of Seamen was fined £150,000 on Tuesday and its assets sequestrated. I understand that further discussions between the NUS and Sealink are taking place today in the offices of ACAS.

As with all other industrial disputes, the resolution of the issues must be a matter for the parties, operating within the law and within their economic circumstances.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that the National Union of Seamen sequestrator has frozen the pensions of retired NUS members uninvolved in the dispute, has prevented the original and wholly legal dispute from being serviced and has put a stop on business unconnected with the sequestration order, such as death and accident claims? Is not that contrary to the principles of natural justice and is not this much harsher than any previous sequestration?

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that sequestration on the basis of secondary action was wholly unjustified? Is it not a purely legal pretence that the Sealink issue is entirely unconnected with the primary dispute with P and O, given that the chairman of Sealink said:

"If P and O does win, we are obviously asking our trade unions to accept the same manning levels"?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the NUS has offered arbitration, has agreed the phasing-in of the full P and O proposals, with the full £6 million savings within the three years that P and O originally demanded, even though the Channel tunnel is at least five years away? Will the Government now use their good offices to bring P and O back to the negotiating table, as the company's intransigence and unreasonableness are the sole cause of the continuing dispute?

Is the Secretary of State further aware that the current P and O proposals to recruit untrained crews, to cut crewing levels by 20 per cent. and to introduce an 18-hour shift day again put at risk passenger safety only 13 months after the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster? Did he see the "Brass Tacks" programme two nights ago, which revealed dangerous undermanning, the use of unserviceable and unreliable equipment and instances of ships' officers being over-fatigued? Will the Government now exercise their powers under the Merchant Shipping Act 1970 to ensure that industrial safety is paramount—or is the Secretary of State deterred by the £100,000 contribution that P and O made to Tory party funds last year?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) cannot come straight from the picket line and expect us to accept what he says as an objective statement of the position in this dispute. He would do much better with regard to the Sealink case if he persuaded the union to accept the ruling of the court and to stop secondary action. It is not remotely helpful to the outcome of this dispute for the Labour party to have joined in, and for Opposition spokesmen to appear on the picket line.

On safety, there is no truth whatsoever in what the hon. Gentleman suggests. There have been general inspections of ships and their equipment, carried out in Rotterdam by Department of Transport surveyors. Emergency procedure drills were conducted before the ships left Rotterdam; and before the ships left service from Dover, emergency procedure drills were witnessed by surveyors with each fresh crew.

So far as an inquiry or arbitration is concerned, ACAS can be brought in at the request of the two parties, but I must emphasise that it is up to the parties. No inquiry will settle issues that relate, apart from anything else, to the commercial judgment of the company, faced with new competition.

The NUS had every opportunity of avoiding sequestration. There is absolutely no doubt about that. The judge said:

"Members and their leaders have only themselves to blame. This is the clearest possible case of deliberate attempted suicide."

With regard to the law, the hon. Member for Oldham, West, and I hope the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition, must accept that unions are not above the law. If they act in defiance of court orders, they must expect them to be enforced. I hope that he will make clear now his support for the law in these matters.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Is my right hon. Friend able to say, first, whether there are any political or financial connections between the National Union of Seamen and the Labour party?

Secondly, after the ignorant comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) concerning secondary action, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the objection to secondary action is that it is taken against those who have no means of influencing the outcome of the primary dispute? That is why secondary action is, rightly, outlawed, and why those who suffer from it should have recourse to the courts for relief and damages.

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. It should be recognised that there is no right for people or unions to spread a strike to companies that are not connected with a dispute; and there is no right to stop fellow workers coming to work, or to force people when they fail to persuade. A much better course for the Opposition, rather than joining in this dispute, would be to point out the value of the law in industrial relations and to seek to use their influence to get the NUS to accept it.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Few in this House would deny that there is a crisis in our merchant fleet, not least with the advent of the Channel tunnel, but does the Secretary of State accept that dialogue and conciliation are much better ways of sorting out these problems than taking up entrenched positions? Will he use the good offices of the Government to encourage such dialogue?

On a constituency matter, is the Secretary of State aware that the P and O ships that link Shetland with the mainland are now at port and will not sail, but that the NUS has agreed that emergency provisions may be carried. In that event, will he encourage P and O to ensure

that ships are made available for that purpose? How does the Secretary of State expect messages to get through to the NUS about the emergency supplies required if the offices of the Aberdeen NUS are sequestrated?

Mr. Fowler: That individual case is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. As for the hon. Gentleman's point on negotiation, it is fair to point out that there has already been substantial movement from the original proposals. Crew rostering arrangements have been improved and working days reduced. The hon. Gentleman must accept that the proposals have been sufficiently attractive for more than 1,000 of the staff to accept them and for 5,000 or 6,000 people to work on these ships under those conditions.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Is my right hon. Friend aware that some 5,000 P and O and Sealink employees wish to work in Dover and Folkestone? Is he aware that many trade unionists approached me and other Members of Parliament about asking the union to have a secret ballot and that the union refused a secret ballot on P and O's terms? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the 24 hours on, 24 hours off system of working is already employed by Sealink and that P and O's only requirement is that it wants to pay its employees more than Sealink to work the same system? Is he further aware that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) and I are extremely worried about the acts of intimidation and violence in our constituencies?

Mr. Fowler: The House should know that since last Tuesday there have been 14 arrests for various public order offences and 61 reported cases of intimidation, ranging from paint daubing to threatening telephone calls. There should be no dispute in the House about the fact that such events and actions are condemned not only by the Government but by the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the National Union of Seamen is one of the most democratic unions in this country, that it regularly has secret ballots and that the outcome of some of those secret ballots was that a majority of the members decided not to accept the blue book, and certainly not the red book, which P and O has been trying to impose on those workers, a system which, if accepted, would be a form of slave labour?

The right hon. Gentleman talks about keeping to the law. Is he aware that, last Saturday, the port master of Heysham harbour cut the ropes of the Tynwald, the Isle of Man boat, putting all the craft in that harbour in jeopardy? Is that not an illegal act? What action will the Government take to deal with that man? The Government are quick enough to support the union being sequestered. They have one law for the rich and one for the trade unions.

Mr. Fowler: That is absurd. If the hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friends wish to report that action, clearly it will be investigated by the police. It is precisely the same as in any other circumstances. That is what the rule of law means, and it is about time that the hon. Gentleman understood the position.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks about secret ballots and slave labour are again patently absurd. More than 1,000 of the staff of P and O have accepted the conditions and between 5,000 and 6,000 people have applied for the jobs which have been advertised with those conditions.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Has my right hon. Friend found time to look at early-day motion 1035? Does he agree that the words "in every possible way" are more weasel words from the party which refused to condemn violence during the miners' dispute?

Mr. Fowler: As I have already made clear, it would be in the public interest for the Opposition spokesman who asked this private notice question to make it clear that he and the Opposition are in favour of the union respecting and following the rule of law in this country.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): In considering the dispute, will the Minister have firmly in mind the appalling contraction of the Merchant Navy that has taken place during the past eight years, and the need to avoid any further damage and contraction which a prolonged dispute would involve? Does he agree that the solution to the dispute must come out of arbitration? Will he urge that course on both parties to the dispute?

Mr. Fowler: No, I will not do that. I do not think that that is the right way to proceed. As I have made clear, I think that that is essentially a matter for the parties concerned.

In regard to competition, I have sympathy with the first point made by the right hon. Gentleman, but surely the lesson of what he is saying is that British companies that are trying to be competitive are also trying to protect British jobs. If the ferries become uncompetitive, the only people who will gain will be overseas competitors and overseas union members.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that secondary action in the dispute is not only illegal, but has been positively against the interests of the P and O strikers? Surely, in a single movement, they have stopped the NUS being able to support those strikers, and they have forced anybody who wants to go to the continent on a ferry to go on a non-union P and O ferry?

Mr. Fowler: As a result of the secondary action, there has been an interruption to services which has been to the disservice of literally everyone, but most of all to the travelling public and to companies that want to send goods from this country to Europe.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that the use of repressive legislation passed by Parliament to destroy the National Union of Seamen, representing seafarers on whom the nation's welfare has always depended, is absolutely in line with the policies of Mussolini and Hitler, who began their attack upon democracy by obliterating trade unions in Italy and Germany? Following the ban on trade unions at GCHQ and the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties, is it not clear that the Government of which he is a member are set on the systematic destruction of democracy in this country?

Mr. Fowler: The right hon. Gentleman is not only being absurd; he is making himself a laughing stock by making such remarks. It is not repressive legislation. There is a right to work without being harassed, intimidated or threatened. There is a right for people to make up their

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own minds about whether to cross a picket line and to work. The right hon. Gentleman should respect those individual rights.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): The very grave allegations made a few moments ago by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that standards of safety have been seriously compromised by the management of P and O are so serious that they should either be substantiated immediately or withdrawn.

Mr. Fowler: As I have said, the suggestions by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) about safety standards are simply untrue. *[Interruption.]* I shall tell the hon. Gentleman how I know. The two P and O ferries that have returned to service have been very thoroughly inspected by Department of Transport surveyors. Probably no two ferries have ever been more thoroughly inspected. As my hon. Friend rightly suggests, it would be much better if the hon. Gentleman withdrew those suggestions.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Does the Minister agree that the adversarial nature of legal proceedings means that the parties are now being driven into positions from which it will be difficult for them to negotiate, and because the ferry operators now believe that they have the upper hand in those legal proceedings they are merely waiting for the union's resolve to be crushed? Does not the Minister think that he should now reflect and use his good offices to urge the parties to go to arbitration because that is the only sensible way to resolve the dispute?

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept that at all. No objective observer would accept the hon. Gentleman's description of what has taken place. The NUS has been given every opportunity to avoid what has taken place in the courts. The courts have made that clear and the judge has made that clear, and the NUS has only itself to blame.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are seeing the dying gasps of boneheaded trade unionism, which contrasts very much with the new realism of the electricians and the engineers? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that it is not surprising that the Labour party should support the NUS when Mr. McCluskie is a member of its national executive and there is more interest in the leadership contest between the leader of the Labour party and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)?

Mr. Fowler: What we do not want to see are the dying gasps of the British ferry industry and the competitive position of British ferries. That is the point. The course on which the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) seems determined to take his party means that British jobs will again be lost as a result of union action and the hon. Gentleman's support.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question, which is an extension of Question Time, and we must now move on.

Business of the House

3.51 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 MAY—Consideration in Committee of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

TUESDAY 10 MAY—At the end on Tuesday motion on the Control of Misleading Advertisements Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 11 MAY—Opposition Day (11th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Crisis in Housing".

Motion to take note of the European Commission's proposal on the approximation of indirect taxation. Details of the EC documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 12 MAY—There will be a debate on prisons on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motion on the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Immunities and Privileges) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 13 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 16 MAY—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions. Second Reading of the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

[Debate on Wednesday 11 May 1988

Relevant European Community Documents

8199/87	*Indirect tax rates and structures*
8200/87	*Value added tax rates*
8201/87	*Removal of fiscal frontiers*
8202/87	*Value added tax clearing mechanism for intra-Community sales*
8203/87 + COR 1	*Convergence of rates of value added tax and excise duties*
8204/87	*Taxes on cigarettes and other manufactured tobacco*
8205/87	
8206/87	*Excise duty on mineral oils*
8207/87 + COR 1	*Excise duty on alcohol*

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 43-viii (1987-88). para 1

Relevant Reports of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee
Third Report (1987-88), (HC 248)
First Special Report (1987-88) (HC 438)]

Mr. Dobson: First, does the Leader of the House recall telling the House last Thursday that he would try to get the Secretary of State for Social Services to clarify when the special Department of Health and Social Security unit dealing with excessive cuts in housing benefit would be set up, where it would be located, and how people affected should make claims? Since then, there has been no such clarification about that U-turn unit, so will the Secretary of State for Social Services now come to the House to spell

out exactly what is going on and to give answers to the questions that hon. Members on both sides of the House are being asked by their constituents?

Secondly, can we expect an early statement explaining the Government's attitude to the Kuwaiti holding in British Petroleum, which they welcomed when it bailed out the privatisation share issue but which is now feared to be a monopoly takeover bid?

Thirdly, we understand that one of the private Bills to be considered next week is the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, which would give that private company planning permission that it might not be able to obtain from the relevant planning authorities. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that the last such Bill was the one which gave P and O planning permission for works at Felixstowe dock. On that occasion, Tory Members of Parliament, including the Prime Minister, were whipped to vote for the Bill and the Government sacrificed a day's business—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dobson: —a whole day's business to help the company get its private Bill through. Will the Government take—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am trying to listen.

Mr. Dobson: I am trying to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Government take the same attitude—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The shadow Leader of the House has made a damaging remark about Conservative Members. He has accused us of being whipped in support of the P and O Bill. That is a grave aspersion on our honour and he should withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: With my background, I do not think that I can say that to be whipped for any Bill is necessarily out of order.

Mr. Dobson: It is an—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have to take the rough with the smooth in this place.

Mr. Bowen Wells: It is a lie.

Mr. Speaker: It may be a little wide of the truth, but it is not a lie.

Mr. Dobson: It is a fact. It is a fact that the Prime Minister stayed up most of the night to vote for P and O. It is a fact that, rather than lose P and O's business, the Government sacrificed a whole day of their business to help P and O get its private Bill through. Will the Government take the same attitude to the Associated British Ports Bill? If not, can we conclude that that company has not yet paid as much into Tory party funds as the £100,000 paid by P and O?

Finally, and not for the first time—but I hope for the last time—when will the Leader of the House discharge his duties to the people of Scotland and establish the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me four questions about the business for next week. First, he asked me about housing benefits. Later this afternoon, my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled will provide the House with details of the changes in housing benefit which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in the House last Wednesday, together with the arrangements to effect those changes. The hon. Gentleman will have to contain himself until that answer is given.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 4 May that, in accordance with the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading, he would refer the Kuwaiti Investment Office's 22 per cent. shareholding in BP to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is now for the commission to report on whether the shareholding is against the public interest.

Private Bills are a matter not for me, but for the Chairman of Ways and Means. The hon. Gentleman's remarks confirm to many of us the wisdom of having matters connected with the usual channels conducted in private rather than in public, especially if one's facts are wrong.

I have discussed the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), and I am considering the best way to proceed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No fewer than 35 hon. Gentlemen wish to take part in the agriculture debate. I remind hon. Members to ask single questions of the Leader of the House on the business for next week.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members will be pleased that, after 11 months of this Parliament, we have the names of the members of the Procedure Committee on the Order Paper? Does he recall that, before we rose for the summer recess, he told the House that he would try to initiate a debate on the previous reports of the Procedure Committee? I realise that there may be some difficulty in obtaining the agreement of the Opposition for this, but will he consider having such a debate on motions in the names of the members of the previous Committee rather than in the name of the Government? The House could then decide whether advice could be given to both sides of the House on how to proceed on those reports. A debate on that matter would be to the benefit of everybody.

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that my hon. Friend is pleased that we have been able to table a motion on the re-establishment of the Select Committee on Procedure. I can also assure him that it is my intention to hold a debate on procedural matters as soon as it can conveniently be arranged. As I have said on many occasions, these things are best discussed with all the parties concerned so as to find the most practical and agreeable way forward.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The Leader of the House was present yesterday when I inquired whether the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland intended to make a statement following yesterday's meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference. Did he transmit that request, and, if so, what was the response?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had a private meeting yesterday with the Taoiseach,

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followed by a full session of the Inter-Governmental Conference. A full statement setting out in detail the subjects discussed at the conference is in the Library.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the remaining stages of a private Member's Bill to limit late abortions for social reasons will be debated tomorrow. Will he do all in his power to prevent any possible filibuster and enable right hon. and hon. Members to exercise their own judgment on this important matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I have a great deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend. Filibusters and rules of order are matters not for me, but for you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the whole House would deprecate the use of filibustering tactics to avoid discussion of this important issue.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): In view of the reports, which have appeared this morning and been confirmed by a Government spokesman this afternoon, that the Government's chief scientific adviser has recommended the cancellation of the fast breeder reactor programme, and of the alarm and despondency that that report has caused, will the Leader of the House ensure that the Secretary of State for Energy makes a statement next week at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets all his information. The information that I have is that the Government review all their R and D programmes from time to time, which is good management, as the hon. Gentleman will agree. We are considering a range of options for the fast reactor programme, but no decisions have yet been taken. I shall certainly refer his question to my right hon. Friend, as I know of his constituency interest in the matter.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): As there is obviously deep feeling in the country and among my colleagues in the House about the future of the British passport, would it not be appropriate for the mood of the House to be tested by having a debate on the subject at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly bear that suggestion in mind. The British passport is not being replaced by a European Community one, as is alleged in some quarters. Rather, a new version of the British passport, machine-readable and in a common format agreed in 1981 with other EEC countries, will start to appear from July when the Glasgow passport office is computerised.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the import of his announcement about next Wednesday's business is that there will be private business from 7 pm to 10 pm and then a debate on the important proposals of Lord Cockfield and his associates on VAT extensions to food, fuel, domestic building and water and sewerage? According to a written answer that I received on Tuesday, it will also be extended to charity sales from gift shops. Is not one and a half hours too short a time in which to debate this important extension of taxation for the British people? If the right hon. Gentleman persists in having the debate at that time of night, will he consider suspending the rule and making the debate a bit longer?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate that this is an important matter. I think that the arrangements I have made for the debate are adequate. I am certainly prepared to have discussions if there is a general wish to extend the time.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend will have seen early-day motion 1053, which has been tabled by various influential Opposition Members.

[That this House condemns the continued Government attempts to interfere with the Independent Broadcasting Authority and British Broadcasting Corporation in their efforts to report and comment on the Gibraltar assassinations; and considers that both the shoot to kill policy and suppression of comment are serious aspects of this extreme right-wing Conservative Government.]

He will notice that it seeks to brand British service men as assassins. I think he will agree with me that it is the most disgraceful and shameful EDM that we have seen. May we have an early opportunity to debate it so that we can point out the way in which certain members of the Labour party seek to twist the knife in the spine of the British services, and so that the public at large, although we are not allowed to say that that is intentional in this place, will make up their minds that it is? It is the Opposition's intention to do all that they can to undermine the success of our service men in the fight against the vile terrorists who, in cold blood, killed three innocent young men in Holland last weekend.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's concern is about the interference with witnesses and the effect that that could have on the inquest that will take place in Gibraltar. Of course there is no question of the Government seeking to challenge the constitutional independence of the broadcasting authorities; it is the damage that is done that we find reprehensible, and it should not have taken place. That is why I had better restrain myself from making further comments now.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the early-day motion referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to remain on the Order Paper, given the terms in which it is couched? It brands three soldiers as assassins, when no decision on that has yet been made in any court of law.

Mr. Speaker: The early-day motion is in order.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): May I press the Leader of the House further on the business announced for Wednesday? It really is not good enough to have a debate lasting one and a half hours after 10 pm on a matter as important as the harmonisation of value added taxes throughout the Community—and the harmonisation of excise duties, too. This is one of the most serious proposals to come out of the EEC. It will affect the sovereignty of the House in ways deeper than many of its other enactments. Surely the matter should have been given a proper debate in prime time.

Mr. Wakeham: I have heard what the right hon. Gentleman said. I repeat that I believe that what we have done is right and adequate, but I am certainly prepared to examine the matter again in view of what he has said.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): From a somewhat less localised standpoint than the hon. Member for Caithness and

Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), may I express my anxiety about the future of the fast breeder reactor programme? As Great Britain has spent an enormous sum developing this most important technology, and as her reputation stands high and it is at least arguable—I put it no stronger than that—that the future of energy in the next century could depend on the continuation of that technology, I hope that the Government will take no decision until we have had a chance to debate this thoroughly.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything to what I said to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I can confirm that no decisions have been taken. The point that my hon. Friend makes has been taken on board, and I shall see that the Secretary of State for Energy knows of his concern.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Is the Leader of the House aware of the concern among those involved in the professional training of social workers that the DHSS has rejected proposals put forward by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work? Would it therefore be possible for the House to debate the priorities, or lack of priorities, of the Government in this vital area, in which we need adequately trained staff to deal with society's problems?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with the hon. Lady that that is an important subject. I cannot find time for a debate in the near future, but I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have an early debate on local government finance so that the House can examine the deplorable decision of Lambeth City council to cancel, at two weeks' notice, a £50,000 grant to the excellent Caine Hall family centre, which looks after families and is run by the London City Mission, because of its refusal to employ homosexuals and lesbians? May we couple that debate with another on Ealing council's continued determination to spend £1,000 of hard-pressed ratepayers' money on an evening for lesbians?

Mr. Wakeham: I was hoping to have a bit of a rest from local government finance, but my hon. Friend raises an important subject. I wish I could promise him a debate on the matter that gives him concern, but I cannot promise one in the immediate future.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): In responding to the question of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) about the Dounreay reports, the Leader of the House confessed his ignorance about the source of the information. I have copies of reports from *The Guardian*, the *Financial Times* and *The Independent*, and I shall let the right hon. Gentleman have them. If there is substance in these reports, there is no need for me to remind the right hon. Gentleman about the importance of jobs and the protection of jobs, or about the shift in long-term energy policy that such a move would bring about. Knowing how difficult it is to get a debate in Government time—it is like trying to find rocking horse droppings—will the Leader of the House prevail upon his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to make a statement after energy questions on Monday?

Mr. Wakeham: When I expressed some surprise about where the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) had got his information, I thought that it was probably more reliable than the front page story in *The Guardian* which I, too, read. My information came direct from the Secretary of State, who said that no decision had been taken. I prefer to rely on his information than on anything that I read in *The Guardian*. The hon. Member asked about a statement. It is probably better for a statement to be made when there is something to say.

Mr. Kilfedder: May I refer again to the Anglo-Eire Conference meeting which took place yesterday and which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has described as a meeting at which crucial and important decisions affecting the people of Northern Ireland were made? Despite what the Leader of the House has said, the communiqué issued after the meeting amounted to very little. It hides more than it reveals and the Unionist people of Northern Ireland—I emphasise Unionist—are being kept in the dark about decisions being made about their future and the future of their children, whereas the SDLP is a party indirectly to all decisions made by the Anglo-Eire Conference.

Is it not a disgrace that right hon. and hon. Members are being kept in the dark about decisions being made in Dublin? Is it not a disgrace that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has not had the decency to come here today to make a statement about the meeting? Will the Leader of the House make sure that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland comes to the House tomorrow, Friday, to tell us, the people of Northern Ireland and the people of the United Kingdom what decisions are being made with Dublin?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland did the right thing in putting a full statement in the Library. It would not be right for him to make a statement in the House. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that decisions about the United Kingdom will be taken by the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Leader of the House will no doubt be aware that a recent public opinion poll in the Republic of Ireland showed that the third most important foreign personage was the Prime Minister, who was second only to the Pope and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The same opinion poll showed that the most important Irish person was the Irish Prime Minister. Should we not capitalise upon the mutual popularity of the two Prime Ministers by having a debate in which we can properly assess the very successful outcome to date of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there will be need for a debate on these matters, but I cannnot promise one next week.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on the social implications of the Church of England's new urban fund and the Bishop of Durham's new opportunity fund, under which every parishioner on the church roll in my constituency will be asked for a flat rate contribution of £20, irrespective of income or ability to pay? Would not such a debate be an opportunity to persuade the bishop to introduce the same generosity, tapers and benefits that we are introducing in the Local Government Finance Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: If the bishop were to take part in the debate, it would have to be in another place. But I take my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): As it is now nearly three months since the Government set up their inquiry into the alleged involvement of Waldheim in the death of British commandos, may we have a statement from the Home Secretary about how the inquiry is progressing, or can the Leader of the House give some indication? Meanwhile, may we have an assurance that there will be no contacts between the British ambassador in Austria and President Waldheim unless and until he is cleared of these allegations?

Mr. Wakeham: The review is being conducted by the Ministry of Defence and it is intended to be as thorough and comprehensive as possible. It is being pursued as quickly as is consistent with proper consideration of the evidence and the need for accuracy. Although good progress is being made, this is a complex and important matter and it would be premature to speculate on when the review might be completed. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the findings before the review is completed.

Mr. Bowen Wells: On Wednesday the harmonisation of VAT and excise duties is to be debated for only one and a half hours. Is it not absurd that we will be considering for such a short time matters that are normally the subject of a Bill—for instance the Finance Bill, which occupies much time on the Floor of the House and in Committee? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the question of dealing with European legislation—a question that I have raised with him before—should be immediately considered by the Procedure Committee, which I am delighted to say he has been able to set up? Will he refer this matter to the Committee urgently because clearly he cannot find proper time for it in normal business hours?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend used the word "absurd". I suggest that he reads the Government motion before reaching such a conclusion. I think that what I have done is the sensible way forward, but, as I have said, I am prepared to have discussions to see whether we can find better arrangements.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Leader of the House make time available for an urgent debate about the state of Britain's footwear industry? Is he aware that there are 11,000 footwear workers in Leicestershire and in other parts of the midlands? Is he also aware of the new figures published by the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation which show that the imports have increased dramatically over the past month? When may we have a chance to debate this important matter?

Mr. Wakeham: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will accept, there are many important matters calling for the time of the House and it is impossible to fit them all in. Perhaps an Adjournment debate would enable him to put some of the points that he wishes the House to appreciate.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon): Will my right hon. Friend consider initiating a debate on the future of the confectionery industry which faces the threat of 80 per cent. of the industry being owned by companies in non-EC countries? Is my right hon. Friend aware that Rowntree is subject to a bid by two Swiss companies, both of which are immune to a counter bid from Rowntree?

Mr. Wakeham: Under the Fair Trading Act 1973 the Director General of Fair Trading has a duty to advise my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about whether a merger or a prospective merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation. The Director General takes into account all matters which may raise questions of public interest, including the points that my hon. Friend raised, and the likely and significant effect on employment and other matters. I think we had best leave it at that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does not the Leader of the House arrange a debate next week about the seamen's dispute so that we can fully engage in an argument about the real facts? Will he tell his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to have a more comprehensive list of the facts when he next appears at the Dispatch Box? Will he tell him, for example, that there is nothing wrong in Labour Members such as myself going to a picket line in Dover or anywhere else when the Prime Minister spends her time supping gin and tonic and whisky with Jeffrey Sterling in Downing street? He is employed as a special adviser to the Government and the Prime Minister and gives £100,000 for Tory party funds.

There is much talk about a ballot. The Leader of the House should tell his right hon. Friends that all the seamen in Britain wanted a ballot, but were stopped from having one by the Tories' friends in the courts. There is also an argument about safety. If the Leader of the House had watched the BBC programme the other night, he would know that many ships are in jeopardy and that Sterling wants to reduce even further the number of men and women who are employed. The Government are interested in seafarers only when they want them to fight their wars.

Mr. Wakeham: The one thing that is quite clear from that diatribe is that the hon. Gentleman does not want to resolve the dispute. I should have thought that he would be the first to understand that in all industrial disputes the resolution of the issues must be a matter for the parties operating within the law and taking cognisance of economic circumstances. I do not think that a debate would improve the situation one iota.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Is my right hon. Friend able to organise a debate on office accommodation in the Palace of Westminster? In view of the comments made in the press by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)—he said that the Labour Whips were not able to give him accommodation—is my right hon. Friend able to confirm that the Opposition Whips were given more than their fair share of accommodation? As all Conservative Members have offices, is it not strange that the Opposition Whips were unable to find the hon. Gentleman an office?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot comment on the remarks of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) about those matters. Office accommodation is not as satisfactory as some people would like, although both sides of the House do their best. The Opposition have their way of doing things and we have our way, and we had best leave it at that.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May we have a full-scale debate on the P and O attempt to break the National Union of Seamen? Some hon. Members wish to make the point that the P and O management appears to be above the law as it has not been brought before the law for its part in the Zeebrugge tragedy. It is attempting to smash the trade union and to worsen——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should ask for a debate, rather than participating in one.

Mr. Cohen: Is not P and O endeavouring to worsen working conditions and passenger safety? Is it not the real enemy within in that dispute, supported by the Government's secondary action?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has confirmed my earlier view that the object of having a debate would not be to try to resolve the matter, if we were to follow his course of action. I should like to see the matter resolved, but I do not believe that a debate involving the expression of such sentiments will help to resolve the dispute.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that his answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) concerning a statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland leaves us absolutely amazed? The description of the statement in the Library as a full statement would not be accepted as such by anyone in Northern Ireland or by anyone reading it intelligently in the United Kingdom.

I impress upon the right hon. Gentleman the need for an urgent statement so that we can cross-examine the Government, in the new light that has dawned, on the fact that the Government will now be concerned about border patrol. Is the impact on the finances of the Republic of Ireland making that demand or is there no real concern that people in Northern Ireland have perished because there has not been proper frontier control? We must address such questions arising for innocuous statements unless we want to leave the Northern Ireland Office in orbit over Maryfield or Phoenix Park.

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that I am not concerned about the victims of terrorism, but I gave what I thought was a full answer to the question. A copy of the statement has been put in the Library, but the question whether it is a full statement is a matter of opinion and the hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion. I have nothing to add to what I have already said, but I shall refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Why should we not have a debate on the P and O dispute? After all, the Government have interfered so much through legislation in industrial relations that they have now made it virtually impossible for any trade union legitimately to pursue its aims and objectives. Why do the Government persist in acting like industrial warmongers rather than trying to bring some peace and satisfaction to what is clearly a troublesome situation at Dover?

Mr. Wakeham: Unlike the Labour Government, which the hon. Gentleman presumably supported, this Government have produced a framework of law so that the parties in dispute can find an orderly, civilised and legal way of settling their disputes. That does not involve debates in the House in the middle of such a dispute, and that is why it would not be sensible to have such a debate.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): If the Leader of the House has not already read the statement placed in the Library regarding the Anglo-Irish Conference meeting yesterday, will he look at it carefully? The first part of the statement relates to those people who were present and covers almost half a page. The remainder is totally unsatisfactory to those of us who represent the Unionist majority. Will the right hon. Gentleman take that into account and recognise that we should have liked to ask a Northern Ireland Minister, the Secretary of State, or the Prime Minister today whether the Secretary of State obtained the assurances from Mr. Haughey during yesterday's discussions that the Prime Minister demanded in this House? We have a right to know whether progress is being made and whether the nonsense of promising further steps to improve security is leading us anywhere.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to what I have already said, but I shall refer the anxiety of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: In a minute.

Anglo-Irish Conference (Meeting)

4.26 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the outcome of yesterday's meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference."

The matter is specific because yesterday's meeting dealt with the Gibraltar killings, extradition, terrorist cross-border racketeering, fair employment proposals, financial assistance to west Belfast, the murders of RAF personnel in Holland and the assurances that the Prime Minister has been seeking from the Dublin Government about their attitude to certain aspects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Those are all issues of great significance, not just to the people of Northern Ireland, but to people in the United Kingdom and further afield.

The matter is urgent because, by this evening, the only people on the island of Ireland who will know nothing in detail about the discussions or their outcome will be the Unionist community in Northern Ireland, for whom these may well be matters of life and death. For two and a half years, the Northern Ireland Office has governed Northern Ireland by this hole-and-corner procedure, never once coming to the House to report on its dealings with the Dublin Government. In the interests of democracy, if nothing else, it should be stopped and we should make a new start this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the outcome of the meeting held yesterday in Dublin of the Anglo-Irish Conference."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, my difficult duty in assessing applications under Standing Order No. 20 is to consider whether such an application should be given priority over the business set down for today and whether it meets the criteria. I regret to say that I cannot find that the matter that he has raised meets all those criteria and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.29 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I tried to raise a point of order before the Standing Order No. 20 application and you said to me, "In a minute." That is normal and it is what we have come to expect, but during business questions two Conservative Members rose on a point of order and you did not say to them, "In a minute." You heard the point of order.

You have come up with a rule under which, in effect, points of order will not be taken until business questions, applications under Standing Order No. 20 and statements have been dealt with. We have accepted that. We simply ask that the rule should be applied equally to both sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not allege such things. I dealt with those points of order because they appeared to require my immediate intervention. If the hon. Gentleman had risen at that time, he would certainly have been heard in the same way. There is no change at all. In our debates, the points of order raised are dealt with immediately.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that 35 hon. Members wish to speak in the following debate, but I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Fallon: I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reflect further on the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) about the standard of language that is acceptable in early-day motions. Unless a ruling is made soon, the Table Office will have an increasingly difficult position forced on it by the growing tendency of hon. Members to table early-day motions that express strong and often controversial views and describe events or policies in highly tendentious language. Some weeks ago the word "mongrelisation" was used. Last night, the events in Gibraltar were described in a highly prejudicial fashion as "assassination". Will you reflect on the standard of language acceptable in early-day motions?

Mr. Speaker: If there is any doubt about the submission of an early-day motion, it is always brought to my attention. That motion was not brought to my attention, and therefore it was considered to be in order by the Table Office.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am genuinely confused. I listen carefully to your rulings, and——

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can anticipate the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I took the point of order during business questions because I thought it arose out of something that had been alleged during business questions. As the hon. Gentleman knows, if something happens in a debate which requires the immediate attention of the Chair, it is raised as a point of order. That is the normal procedure, and that is what I did. If it is a point of order that requires my judgment on a general matter something not requiring immediate attention, it is taken in its proper place, which is after the applications under Standing Order No. 20. There has been no change.

Mr. Cook: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to you and I accept what you are saying. The problem is that I recall clearly a lengthy exchange on just these issues, fronted by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It seemed to me that at that time you were ruling in a different way.

Mr. Speaker: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. That was a matter of points of order arising out of Question Time. It was completely different from a point of order that calls for immediate attention. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Gentleman saying that any point of order that requires the immediate attention of the Chair should be deferred?

Mr. Cook: With respect, Mr. Speaker, that was the reason why I could not understand the ruling in the first place.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you help Northern Ireland Members?

Important events are occurring in our Province, and we have only this Chamber in which to speak. Now we are not permitted to discuss anything that is happening in Northern Ireland. We do not have debates. Matters are announced by radio and television, and that is all we know about. Surely there must be more help. What is the use of our coming here when we cannot speak? When we did not come, it was said we should come, and when we do come, you do not let us speak.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman wishes to take part in today's debate, and no doubt he will raise Northern Ireland matters, but as I told the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), who made an application under Standing Order No. 20, I must have regard to the criteria laid down in the Standing Order.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Further to the point of order about early-day motion 1053, Mr. Speaker. You told the House that the Table Office had not referred this early-day motion to you, and it is just possible that you had not had an opportunity of looking at it until the matter was raised with you on the Floor of the House today. That being so, would you undertake to consider the wording of this motion, and let the House have your advice on whether, if the allegation which relates to Gibraltar had related to somewhere within the United Kingdom, you would have allowed a motion such as this to go on the Order Paper?

Will you also bear in mind that some of those who signed the early-day motion are members of the national executive of the Labour party? In the opinion of many of us, a motion of this kind is deeply prejudicial to the proceedings that will take place in Gibraltar during the coroner's inquest, and are a gross abuse of the right of hon. Members to table early-day motions.

Mr. Speaker: I will reflect on what the hon. Gentleman has said, but it would be an intolerable imposition on the Speaker if he had to look at every early-day motion. I have to rely on the judgment of those in the Table Office. I have already ruled that this early-day motion was considered to be in order or it would have been brought to my attention and I would have had to adjudicate upon it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would be an irksome duty if you had to read the more than 1,000 early-day motions right through to the bitter end. You would, for instance, recently have been reading about the success of Hamilton Academicals, Wigan rugby football club, Bristol rugby club, which I believe lost, Sunderland and Lincoln, which, for some obscure reason, has been supported by the SDP. About the only sporting success that has not been delineated in an early-day motion is Steve Davis's success at the Crucible last week—and there must be a reason for that.

If you had to look at all the motions, you would not have time to notice in the House points of order that arise on spec and cause you trouble and worry. To conclude that little episode, I remind you that I told you about two years ago that it would be difficult to sustain the process for long, and today, you had to break that ruling. In the case of further interruptions by my hon. Friends—it probably will not be me—will you allow them the same privilege?

Mr. Speaker: If a matter requiring my attention arises during a debate or during Question Time, I would hear it. That is the doctrine of first opportunity, well enshrined in "Erskine May".

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may inadvertently have said something that you may wish to correct in a statement tomorrow. If I understand what you have said today, you have propagated a new doctrine—that, although Mr. Speaker is not inerrant or incapable of error, the Table Office is inerrant and incapable of error and that anything that is accepted by the Table Office cannot subsequently be challenged with Mr. Speaker. That must, with the greatest respect, be wrong, Mr. Speaker. It must be open to every hon. Member to challenge ad hoc decisions by Clerks in the Table Office and for you to apply your own judgment to matters that have not been referred to you. I do not believe that you would wish to live with a situation where, if something out of order has inadvertently been accepted by the Table Office, you are thereby debarred from subsequently ruling that it ought not to have been accepted.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that I did not say what the hon. Gentleman has suggested. Of course, if something is plainly out of order, then it is correct that it should be challenged. I am saying that early-day motions—there are thousands of them—are screened by the Table Office. If there is any doubt about them, they are brought to my attention. It happens with very few, but plainly if any of them subsequently turned out to be out of order, it would certainly be in order for hon. Members to challenge them and bring them to my attention.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I will hear the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder).

Mr. Kilfedder: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During business questions, I raised a point of order because I was provoked by what I had heard. I apologise to you because I believe that your ruling was absolutely right, and I should have waited until after business questions. I know that now and I wish to apologise to you for any difficulties that I may have caused you.

Mr. Speaker: On that happy note, may we finish?

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is one of those who constantly seeks to take part in our debates.

Mr. Banks: I do not get much of a chance.

Mr. Speaker: I will have to bear that in mind, but a large number of hon. Members wish to speak in the debate today. It is a rare opportunity to debate agriculture, and I think we should proceed.

BILL PRESENTED

European Communities (Amendment)

Mr. Tony Benn presented a Bill to repeal section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972 and to return full

and unfettered powers to the United Kingdom Parliament over all legislation enacted by the European Communities which has had, has, or would otherwise have, legal effect in the United Kingdom: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 153.]

Agriculture

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Mr. Speaker: If we have five-minute speeches from hon. Members—I have no way to impose such a request—most of those who wish to speak will be called. If we cannot have five minutes, may I ask for speeches of no more than 10 minutes today?

4.38 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): The Order Paper lists a number of documents which have been recommended by the Scrutiny Committee for consideration by the House. These relate to the stabilisers, set-aside of agricultural land, cessation of farming and the price fixing. I shall endeavour to cover all these in my remarks. Most of the measures flowed from the European Council agreement in February, which was the subject of considerable discussion in the House during the agriculture debate on 15 February, immediately following the summit's decisions. The regulations were then the subject of considerable negotiation in the Agriculture Council, and were eventually adopted on 25 April. As they were not substantially changed from those that we debated in February, I hope that the House will forgive me if I refer to them fairly briefly.

Document 5004/88 concerns the implementation of the stabiliser for wine, which was also part of the February agreement. We had an intense negotiation on the details of that provision at the March Council, and the regulation has not yet been adopted, as the opinion of the European Parliament is not yet available. Therefore, I will bring the House up to date on that in more detail.

Of course, the price-fixing proposals are highly topical. The Agriculture Council has had two discussions on these so far, but at this stage they have been only very general —the opening skirmishes, so to speak—with broad positions being outlined. The detailed negotiations will begin in earnest after the French presidential elections, so this is a highly appropriate time for the House to debate the subject.

That is a large enough menu, but as Mr. Speaker has just implied, this is one of the major agriculture debates of the year and I hope that the House will agree that it would be appropriate for me to refer to other matters which are of great importance to our farmers and hence, in one sense, inextricably bound up with the documents before us.

First, some general but fundamental comments bear repeating. I am well aware of the pressure on farm incomes. That aspect has been drawn attention to in recent debates by my hon. Friends—though I am not sure that those outside agriculture who freely comment on the protected, so-called comfortable position of farmers, as they put it, are equally aware of it. The fact is that since 1977, farm incomes in general have declined by some 50 per cent. in real terms.

The latest farm income publication just published by my Ministry is a mine of information. It gives not just the aggregate position, as did the White Paper published in January, but data for farms of different types around the country. Therefore, we have a very thorough and detailed picture. Also given are figures from a survey of Inland

Revenue returns which cover the total income, as assessed for tax, of those who farm. As they deal with actual incomes, it is useful and important to consider them.

Those figures show that in 1983-84, about 68 per cent. of farmers had incomes of less than £10,000; about 24 per cent., between £10,000 and £20,000; and about 8 per cent., above £20,000. Only about 50 per cent. of total income to farming households was derived from farming alone. The rest of their income came from other businesses, other jobs, investment income, and so on.

By no means all farmers can supplement their income from the farm to a significant extent by having other jobs, so many of them have low incomes. Indeed, the figure for actual income purely from agriculture and horticulture revealed in the survey is much lower than that which I have just quoted—and the position has not improved since 1984. For some—such as those in the dairy sector—the figure has improved, but for others it is worse.

We can see that farm incomes really are under pressure, at a time when incomes in most other walks of life are rising in real terms. Many farmers earn what would be regarded as a very modest wage, given the hours of work that they and their spouses put in, often in very bad weather in many parts of the country—as my hon. Friends testified earlier. The paradox is that that pressure is occurring at a time when support for agriculture has been rising significantly.

In terms of CAP support—in other words, mainly taxpayers' subsidies going to commodities—expenditure in this country has risen by 28 per cent. in real terms since the Government took office. That statistic alone belies the accusation that one sometimes hears from hard-pressed farmers that Government support for them is diminishing.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: May I just finish the sentence?

That may be a gut reaction by farmers, when they see their income declining. I can understand such accusations, but they are misdirected. The truth of the matter is that those critics are wrong and that it is the other way round.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend make the point that the reason for the apparent disparity is that much of the money paid in support goes to the storers of produce rather than to the producers of food and that only quotas can directly support producers rather than storers?

Mr. MacGregor: Quotas have a different effect. They are not a form of support but are an intervention in the market system. I want to describe the situation as I see it, which is not wholly as my hon. Friend has described it. While some element of the subsidy is going to the storers, it is also the case that if one was producing the same volume as is being currently produced, and if that support was withdrawn, then farm incomes would considerably diminish. It works through, in the support that it gives to the farming community as a whole.

As so many wish to speak in this debate, I wish to set the scene and I therefore do not wish to give way too often. I wish to explain how——

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No—I must be allowed to get on with my argument.

The paradox of declining farm incomes and increasing subsidies can be explained principally by the fact that farmers are producing more than real markets can sustain. In other words, for part of their production at least, they are unable to meet effective demand at the going price without a significant subsidy to cover their current costs of production. That is another way of drawing attention to the surpluses, which are worldwide, and to the excessive costs to the taxpayer of sustaining them.

Nobody can argue—and no farmer, in his heart of hearts, does argue—that we are getting value for money from excessive subsidies and that they make sensible use of the nation's and taxpayers' resources. That is why I have constantly argued that we cannot bring stability to our agriculture and to farmers until we have dealt with that problem and have contained the sharply escalating rise that has taken place in subsidy support over the past few years. Hence the importance of the stabiliser negotiations and the Brussels summit outcome.

I am often asked what I see as our main policy objectives for British agriculture. I shall briefly restate what I have been saying in the many meetings that I have been holding with farmers around the country. First and foremost, and for the reasons I have just given, we must get supply and demand into better balance and get on top of the budgetary indiscipline in spending on agriculture in the Community that we have seen hitherto, as well as surpluses worldwide. Hence the importance not only of a stabiliser regime but of a successful outcome to the Uruguay talks. Hence, too, the priority and attention that the Government, and Agriculture Ministers, have been devoted to them.

Secondly, we must keep British agriculture thoroughly efficient and competitive, taking advantage of technological change and not halting it simply because of surpluses. To take a Luddite approach and fail to embrace the fruits of scientific progress is not the way in which other industries have become, and remain, competitive in world markets. I want to ensure that our agriculture remains competitive and thoroughly up to date.

Thirdly, it means focusing on the market place in meeting changing and ever more demanding consumer requirements. That means quality and a heavy emphasis on marketing throughout the whole food chain. That is primarily a matter for the industry itself.

Fourthly, it means that we must face up to the fact that more land will have to come out of agricultural production —and, yes, more farmers as well. Hence the importance of our many initiatives to help ease that process, including set-aside. I suspect that that process will be much more painful in some other member states, where there are still vastly greater numbers of very small farmers than we have, and where agricultural structures are well behind ours. It is also worth underlining that the vast majority of land will, after that process, still be used for basic food production, which will remain the primary industry of the countryside.

Fifthly, from the point of view of the rural economy, it is essential to recognise that land is a resource to be managed and that alternative products outside agriculture —alternative businesses and leisure activities—will all have an increasing part to play in providing rural employment and rural prosperity. Many farmers are, and have always been, highly entrepreneurial. Many have already recognised the signs and have been blazing a trail in alternative businesses and diversification for some time.

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To assist that process, we have introduced the farm diversification scheme, which has had a good response in its first few months.

Sixthly—here I know that I will carry the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) with me—the changing agricultural scene provides exciting opportunities to achieve a new balance between farm production and environmental objectives. Hence the ESAs, which have also got off to a very promising start.

All six objectives form a coherent pattern and one which I believe is right for the future of British farming, the rural economy and the attractiveness of our countryside. The various new initiatives we are now pursuing, often taking the lead in the European Community, all flow from them.

I will not dwell on the details of the stabilisers, as we have already debated them twice in the House. I shall confine myself to three points on the stabilisers. First, while we have not gone as far as some people—especially those outside agriculture and in other industries—would like, I hope that no one will be in any doubt about the potentially severe impact of stabilisers and hence the pressure on farmers if production continues to rise.

The severe restraining effect of the oilseed stabiliser—which is necessary in view of the escalating costs and hence incentives to further production of the previous regime—is now well recognised. But in cereals, if Community production exceeds the maximum guaranteed quantity of 160 million tonnes by whatever amount regularly over the next four years, intervention and buying-in prices will automatically be cut by as much as 12 per cent., coming on top of reductions in recent years. Cumulatively, that could mean that by 1993 the common level of support for cereal producers could be as much as one third lower than it was in its peak in 1983-84.

That is a not insignificant reform to undertake. It does of course have its good side for some sectors in our industry, in the livestock and especially intensive livestock sectors, but it is none too soon, in the light of the likely continuing technological developments and the potential worldwide surpluses. I shall have more to say about that later. The point for our farmers is that had we not acted now to get gradual restraint into the market and to curb production, our cereal growers could have faced much more drastic emergency action at short notice later on. They ask for greater certainty and stability. This helps to provide a measure of it.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I find it difficult to understand how it will help our hard-pressed producers if their returns are cut even further when they are below production costs already. And why are we constantly talking down the world price of wheat and saying that it is lower than the price British farmers are receiving, when that cannot be proved? When our millers are paying up to £250 a tonne for American wheat to be delivered to East Anglia, and home producers are getting only about £100 a tonne, how is it in the interests of British farmers for the price to be cut still further? They are in an appalling position already.

Mr. MacGregor: The support price will fall if production goes on rising. I beg my hon. Friend—who I know is very interested in these matters—to note that the subsidy costs of the cereals regime have been rising very sharply since 1984. It is unsustainable for the increase to continue at such a pace, especially if it provokes a further international trade war. I should like to say more about that later. One part of the answer must be to take more land out of cereal production. That will be crucial if we are to solve our problems.

The second point on stabilisers is that the wine stabiliser does not affect us as producers, but is of great concern to us as taxpayers, as net contributors to the Community budget and, in some instances, as consumers. A tough wine stabiliser is also important in keeping within the FEOGA budget ceilings. It is therefore very important to the United Kingdom that a tough stabiliser should be achieved in our negotiations, and that outcome has been achieved.

The key point is that the price for obligatory distillation has been set at 50 per cent. of the guide price for the first 10 per cent. of normal production, representing about 10 million hectolitres, and at 7·5 per cent. thereafter. I put that on the record although I know that not many people study wine stabilisers in detail. It represents a cut of over 50 per cent. in the average price paid at present. I believe that it was entirely right to arrange such a tough wine stabiliser, because we were producing surplus wine that no one wanted, and I believe that the package meets our major objective in providing truly deterrent measures against over-production.

I have already mentioned that the wine stabiliser has not been agreed in the Council, because it has yet to be considered by the European Parliament. I know that the House supports the Government in attaching great importance to the need for all the stabilisers to be agreed together. Let me give some reassurance on that point. The Agriculture Council has agreed that any change resulting from comments from the European Parliament would be adopted by the Council only on a unanimous vote.

Thirdly, the new arrangements for budgetary discipline are crucial, and are already making themselves felt. Greater realism has been entering into the discussion of the Agriculture Council for some time, but this is now strongly reinforced by the awareness—in any decisions that we make, but, I suspect, especially at price-fixing time—that the financial guideline has to be respected. All the old loopholes have been closed, and, apart from an allowance for large movements in the dollar, there are no circumstances that can justify exceeding the guideline; nor can the Commission defer expenditure by allowing the build-up of stocks.

A very important provision in the new arrangements—which the Government worked hard to achieve, and which I believe has not been given as much attention as it deserves—is that stocks must be written down to their market value when they are taken into intervention. That means that if stocks were to build up there would be an immediate pressure on the guideline. The Commission and Council have made great efforts recently to run down the mountains of food in intervention, and the new accounting arrangement will be a powerful deterrent to their re-creation.

It is worth mentioning that while the levels of intervention stocks are still higher than we would like, considerable progress has been made. In August 1986, the Community had some 1·4 million tonnes of butter in intervention: over 10 months' supply. By contrast, in February this year the level of stocks was not much more

than half that. For skimmed milk powder the improvement has been even more dramatic, with stocks falling from over 1 million tonnes in 1986 to a quarter of that level in February this year.

Cereals stocks have also been reduced, albeit with assistance from two successive poor harvests. Stocks of wheat totalled over 10 million tonnes in 1986 and are now under 3 million tonnes, and there have also been reductions in stocks of barley and rye. We see similar progress in the United Kingdom on its own, with butter stocks down by 36 per cent. from February 1987 to February 1988, skimmed milk powder stocks down to practically nothing and cereals down by 51 per cent.

Emphasis on the financial guideline takes me straight on to the price fixing. The proposals here follow up the agreements on stabilisers, which of course affect the support levels for many commodities in 1988-89, and the Commission has generally proposed no further changes to price levels. The proposals include a number of related measures, some of which would involve effective reductions in support levels. For two sectors—fruit and vegetables, and tobacco—the proposals put more flesh on the bones of the stabilisers which were agreed at the summit.

We have two major concerns in the negotiations. First, it is essential that we respect the new agricultural guideline of 27·5 becu—£19 billion—for 1988. The Commission's proposals are made within it. We must ensure that the final decisions taken by the Council also respect it. That means that we must carry forward the essential message of the summit: supply needs to be brought closer to real market demand.

There is also a major deficiency in the package on green rates. The Commission has proposed only one green rate change—a 10-point devaluation for Greece. I have made it quite clear that in our view, some devaluation of the green pound at this price fixing is fully justified, and I would like to tell the House why.

In agriculture, as across the whole range of economic activity, we are looking towards 1992 and the completion of a single European market. The Commission last year set the Community the aim of abolishing all MCAs by then. That is essential if we are to have a proper single market without frontier controls, and I strongly support it. It would therefore be sensible—and wholly consistent with the Commission's aim—to take a measured step in the direction of MCA abolition at the current price-fixing.

I have told the Agriculture Council that I find it surprising, and discriminatory, that the Commission proposes a devaluation for only one country—Greece—and makes no provision for a devaluation in the United Kingdom.

Although sterling has appreciated recently, our MCAs remain higher than in any member state except Greece, and are still in double figures for the main crop products. That means that support prices in other countries are higher than ours.

Producers here have recognised the essential need for CAP reform if the system is not to collapse under its own weight. That shows their realism, and I welcome it and am grateful for it. But it would be wrong to ask them to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of budgetary restraint. To avoid this we need to start reducing our MCAs now, and I shall continue to press for a devaluation of all products. I well understand the desire for reasonably fair competition—I say "reasonably fair" because, as the Commission document on price fixing points out, there are a whole host of different factors in each member state which in different ways made up the competitive mix, and one cannot isolate any one. I hope that this has made the position clear on the general green pound.

It is worth pointing out that a 1 per cent. green pound devaluation adds only one fiftieth of 1 per cent. to retail prices. The House is aware of the excellent record on food prices under this Government. The average annual increase in food prices since May 1979 has been just under 6 per cent. and the trend in recent years has been steadily downwards. The most recent figures indicate a rate of just over 3 per cent. This compares with an average increase of nearly 16·5 per cent. per annum during the period of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): What my right hon. Friend has said about the need for devaluation of the green pound will be welcomed by everyone who supports British agriculture, which demands level playing fields, not favourable treatment. What I find hard to understand, and perhaps my right hon. Friend can explain, is why the Commission is so negative and does not seem to wish to produce proposals for making these playing fields level so that our agriculture can compete fairly.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has produced in its document—it is worth reading, because it is an interesting passage—some explanations of why it is very difficult to establish across the Community for every member state what a level playing field is. I go along with that, because when one looks at any commodity one sees that a whole range of factors have to be considered when trying to establish what is—to use my hon. Friend's words—a level playing field. Obviously it is for the Commission to justify its own price proposals. The Commission is arguing that the proposals that it puts forward come pretty well up to the budgetary ceiling and it feels that it cannot go any further. So this is going to be a difficult negotiation, but I hope that I have made it clear where I stand.

Pig farmers are additionally suffering from a variety of problems specific to the sector which are nothing to do with the CAP but very much to do with straightforward supply and demand in a comparatively free market. On one of the two areas that affect the CAP—private storage aids being the other—I should like to go further. MCAs apply to pigmeat to compensate for differences in the price of cereals between member states. But the calculations take no account of the use of cereal substitutes in the pig ration. The result is that these costs are lower in the Netherlands than in the United Kingdom, yet Dutch pigmeat still receives an MCA subsidy when it comes to the United Kingdom. It is an internal trade distortion; it is nothing to do with support prices, because there is no support price regime, apart from a very small aspect. This means that for pigmeat MCAs produce distortions rather than prevent them.

While our MCAs in pigmeat have already substantially reduced in recent months—I made that point frequently at Question Time this afternoon—and therefore have considerably reduced the trade distortion so that it is now quite small, I am nevertheless still pressing, as a point of principle, for the complete elimination of our MCAs in this sector, although, again, because the Commission has

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not proposed it and a number of member states would not wish to change the system, this is going to be a very difficult part of the negotiations.

Time does not permit me to deal with each of the commodities, so I will touch only on the main ones. On cereals, the Commission is proposing a general freeze on prices. It has also proposed that monthly increments to intervention prices should be halved, which would reduce support levels by around 2 per cent. this year. As this flows from discussion at the European summit, I am ready to accept the proposal, although I recognise some of its disadvantages, such as that it may encourage putting cereals into intervention earlier in the year. So I would be equally ready to accept any other solution which had an equal effect—for example, a direct cut in intervention prices. We must maintain the momentum of the changes agreed at the summit if we are to bring cereals production in the Community under control.

Some, of course, point to the improving world market for cereals and question whether the problem of surpluses still exists. It is possible that cereals consumption will exceed production in 1988, and the stocks that overhang the world market are falling. But in the past year, with our extremely difficult harvest in the United Kingdom due to weather conditions—as we in East Anglia need no reminding—we still had a surplus, as did the Community as a whole, so that there was a continuing need to export to third countries, with the big cost involved in the export refunds.

We must also have it in mind that in the United States, which I visited recently, under current support programmes some 69 million acres of land is set aside; that is 80 per cent. of the total cereals area in the entire Community. Some 23 million acres of that land is set aside under the conservation reserve programme, which means that such land has to be set aside for 10 years. But the remaining 46 million acres is set aside on a yearly basis, and our set-aside schemes will, of course, go beyond a yearly basis.

That illustrates the massive potential in the world for increased production. It is significant that the United States, in any case, under the provisions of the Food Security Act, plans to reduce the area set aside next year because of the fall in United States stocks of grain. Other major grain-producing countries will not continue to hold back their production if the Community does not maintain its efforts to control its own surpluses.

There is one other major cereals issue this year—the proposal for a cereals incorporation aid, designed to increase the quantities of cereals used in animal feed. It was agreed at the summit that the Commission should be requested to come forward with ideas for increasing cereals usage, and I agree that the more cereals that we could use in this way the better. But any scheme to encourage this must be cost-effective and must not create distortions. I believe that the scheme put forward by the Commission does not meet those criteria, and I have therefore been expressing very serious reservations about it.

I have several reservations, which I cannot cover because of the time factor, but perhaps the most fundamental one is that it seems a peculiar oddity, to say the least, that we are imposing, on the one hand, the cereals co-responsibility levy—which, as the House well knows, I strongly dislike and to which I have frequently expressed objections—which adds to the costs of cereal users, and on the other hand we may introduce a complicated cereals incorporation subsidy to reduce its effect. It would be better not to have the cereals co-responsibility levy in the first place. But that is an argument that I seem to be alone in pushing in the Council. This ill-thought-out proposal reinforces my belief that a reduction in price is the best way of making cereals more attractive to animal feed compounders.

For all these reasons, and others that I have not been able to go into, I am expressing concern about this proposal and will continue to argue—I hope that I will have the House with me—that if our aim is to increase consumption of cereals it is better to cut prices than to increase the co-responsibility levy, because lower prices benefit consumers more directly.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I really must not give way at this stage because I have other points that I must cover to explain the Commission's view and the Government's position on it, and I know that many hon. Members wish to speak.

Dairy products are unlikely to feature very much in this year's price review. I am taking the opportunity to press very strongly for the Commission to come forward with proposals later this year to improve the transferability of milk quotas, including ideas for removing the link between quotas and the land, giving member states more flexibility in the operation of quotas, within, of course, the need to have overall effective production controls in each member state. I should like to see these discussed and agreed in the Council this year so that they are ready for operation in 1989, at the end of the first five-year period of quotas.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I feel that I ought not to give way, because so many hon. Members wish to express their points of view. My right hon. Friend will be winding up at the end and can respond then.

I will continue to pursue my suggestion as I believe that it is highly desirable. Again, it is an initiative in which the United Kingdom is in the lead.

There is one other point on milk that I ought to mention, because it is frequently raised by some of my hon. Friends, who point out that there are occasions when users of milk, particularly manufacturers of cheese, are short of supplies. The point is that it is not that we are short over the year in general if we produce to or near our quota; it is that at certain points of the year, effectively the seasonal trough in the summer, supply falls sharply compared with other times in the year.

So, as we bring milk production into line with demand, the balancing of demands in the seasonal production trough becomes increasingly important. I have therefore urged the Milk Marketing Board to make every effort this year to avoid the problems encountered with the supplies of milk for cheese manufacture last autumn.

The board has advised me that contingency planning has progressed well on three fronts in particular. First, the programme for rationalising butter and powder manufacturing capacity has enabled a substantial reallocation of milk to higher value manufacturing usage. Secondly, manufacturers have been encouraged to make more

Cheddar during the peak of milk production; manufacture of hard pressed cheese is currently estimated to be 25 per cent. up on the first quarter of 1987. Thirdly, the board is seeking to reach agreement with manufacturers on arrangements to give a higher priority allocation of milk for territorial cheese manufacture in the July-October period.

The House will appreciate that the extent to which the plans succeed will depend upon the co-operation of both sides of the industry. But I am hopeful that the industry as a whole will fully recognise the importance of avoiding seasonal shortages of high-quality home-produced cheese for which there is a regular and growing demand.

I have explained to the House on previous occasions why I regard a set-aside scheme as an important complement to action on price. It also deals with the general objective of getting more land out of production, particularly arable land. It provides an alternative source of income for those farmers most affected by reductions in Community support. It provides payment for management of the land—this is a crucial point to underline—that will conserve the countryside and preserve the environment for the benefit of the public as a whole.

The timetable is very tight. Member states are now obliged to introduce set-aside for the 1988-89 cereals marketing year. Effectively, that sets a target of 1 July which we must make every effort to meet, although I have made it clear in the Council that for those of us who have to take the scheme through our Parliaments it is an ambitious timetable. The Commission last week completed the drawing up of the detailed regulations and I am now considering with my agricultural colleagues in this country the form of the United Kingdom scheme in the light of these rules.

The views we have received since I issued our consultation document in December have been most helpful and will be taken into account. Once we have completed that consideration, we must have the clearance of the Commission, like all other member states, and then put our proposals before the House. I hope to make an announcement fairly soon. I will, however, make two points now.

First, the Community rules give member states the option to permit set-aside land to be grazed at a lower level of payments. That is now being described as grazed fallow. I was one of those who insisted that this should be optional and not compulsory. I have received divergent views on whether the United Kingdom should take up the option. Factors that will need special attention are the potential environmental benefits from permitting grazing, though there will be environmental conditions for set-aside as a whole; the possible adverse effects of an encouragement to extra production, and problems with administration and control, which are quite severe.

One of the points of which I am particularly aware, and which will be very important in our consideration of all factors in reaching a decision, is the concern expressed by farmers, particularly in the hills and especially by the sheep industry, about the knock-on effects in lowland areas of the pressure on cereal prices and, hence, the implications for hill areas, which often have no alternative to sheep production, if there were a grazed fallow scheme on arable land which might have the effect of expanding sheep production. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I heard what was said on that point during Question Time and I have heard the response to what I am saying now. I shall certainly be listening carefully to further views expressed during the debate.

Secondly, I want to make one point clear to avoid doubt in the minds of farmers about what land will qualify for set-aside payments. The Commisson rules allow set-aside of land in production in the 1987-88 crop year, provided that the land has not been brought into arable production since the beginning of 1988. The implications of this are obvious for any farmer intending to plough up grassland this year in the hope of benefiting from set-aside payments; that will not be possible.

I should also mention one other element of the stabilisers package, to which one document before the House refers; the scheme for cessation of farming which in fact means early retirement. Member states may take up the scheme if they wish and may offer payments to older farmers taking all their land out of production or amalgamating it with neighbouring farms. I have constantly emphasised in the Council the need to ensure that such schemes do not add to production, and preferably reduce it. We succeeded in getting it confined substantially in that direction, though not entirely so. The scheme will be taken up elsewhere in the Community where there is a large proportion of such elderly farmers, often farming on a small scale. But my initial view is that the scheme is not attractive for the United Kingdom.

I have had to outline many of the points in some detail and I apologise to the House for taking time on that. However, it is important, as this is the first opportunity we have had to show the United Kingdom's general position. I should like to finish on a few quick points of general importance to agriculture, particularly bearing in mind the fact that, as Mr. Speaker said, we do not often have main debates on agriculture.

In horticulture, which has to look to the market for its return, the mood is buoyant. Growers have been able to benefit for the past five years from the very favourable grants for modernising their glasshouses and orchards and these are now beginning to show an effect in keeping our industry capable of producing good quality products economically and performing well in today's competitive conditions.

The new policy initiatives that we have taken on environment and farm diversification, both of which I listed as key objectives at the beginning of my speech, are already producing good results. In the first year of operation of the five original English environmentally sensitive areas we made 1,480 agreements for farmers, covering 35,600 hectares—about three quarters of the area considered suitable for entry to the scheme.

I am delighted to say that in the 1988 application period, which has just closed, there has been a similarly excellent response. Nearly 1,000 farmers have applied to join the scheme this year with land covering some 65,500 hectares. In all, this brings the total to just over 100,000 hectares or 85 per cent. of the area considered suitable for the scheme. That is a success story by any standards and a resounding reply to those sceptics who said that farmers would not be attracted by the ESA initiative.

The farm diversification grants scheme has also got off to a good start in attracting lots of interest. While talking about environmental matters, I emphasise the considerable switch in capital grants that we have undertaken in recent years, cutting down substantially on those grants

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that assist in the production of agricultural products, thus, of course, adding to the surpluses, and concentrating on grants with environmentally favourable effects.

I simply do not think that the scale of our change has yet been appreciated. The simplest way of demonstrating the impact of our approach is to give the figures. Grants for conservation and effluent prevention work took up 4 per cent. of our total expenditure in 1983 but represent 48 per cent. of expenditure under the current scheme. Grants for production facilities under schemes presently available for take-up have declined from 96 per cent. to 52 per cent. of total expenditure.

This year's Budget has great importance and highly favourable effects for farmers. The most marked is the removal from the tax system of so-called capital gains incurred prior to April 1982, which will exclude the inflation element of land value increases which occurred during the 1970s. That will allow farmers and landowners to unlock the value of their assets, thereby giving many of them the opportunity to reduce their borrowings or reappraise their utilisation of their resources—very important at this time of substantial agricultural change. That is not the only good point for farmers.

Retirement relief for farmers will be extended and the further changes to the inheritance tax system, combined with earlier changes to capital transfer tax under this Government, will make it much easier for farms to be passed on without expensive or complicated schemes to finance the tax payments, the effective tax rate being cut to 20 per cent. Farmers' incomes—along, of course, with those of others—will benefit from the reduction in the basic rate of tax to 25 per cent., the reduction in the higher tax rates and the alignment of the small companies rate of corporation tax to the basic rate.

An important point in this connection is the effect of the reductions in direct tax rates on a point that has frequently been raised by farmers—I want to stress it now—in the context of the changes to the capital allowance system in 1984. Many farmers have pointed out that 90 per cent. of farm businesses are unincorporated, so that, as they saw it, they did not fully share in the offsetting effect, when the capital allowance changes were introduced, of the reduction in the corporation tax rate. The changes in this year's Budget mean that that point, which has often led some farmers to ask for a reintroduction of modest capital allowances for unincorporated businesses, has lost its impact. The average rate of tax for unincorporated farm businesses will now be around or well below corporation tax rates.

I know that the Opposition have supported our environmental initiatives, and I am grateful for that, but a marked feature of the current agricultural scene is how little the Opposition have to say of any value or benefit to farming.

The hon. Member for South Shields and his hon. Friends sometimes try to make something of a point about the pressure on farm incomes. We all understand that—none more so than me, and I have already commented on it at length. But it is somewhat of a pointless comment, because the hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he fully supports the CAP reforms for which we have been successfully striving, and I am grateful for that. As I have constantly stressed, these are necessary for the long-term stability of British agriculture; but it is certainly these that are putting the pressures on farm incomes so the hon. Gentleman and his party have nothing to offer in that respect.

In cases where they have something different to say, the impact of the Opposition's policies will be extremely unfavourable for and unhelpful to farming. They have already opposed the basic and higher rate tax changes that we are making, and presumably will oppose the capital tax changes, too. We have just incorporated in the Local Government Finance Bill—in the primary legislation—the exemption of agricultural land and buildings from our replacements for rates. The Labour party voted against the amendment and so would be imposing a very heavy additional financial burden on farmers if it got the chance. The hon. Member for South Shields certainly made it clear earlier that he opposes any changes in the green pound and MCAs, which farmers consider to be so important to their competitive position at present—and he nods now.

The Labour party clearly has nothing to say of any value to farmers at the present time. It is our policies that deal directly with the current problems facing agriculture. Those policies are working for a more sensible system within the Community and a more stable long-term basis for agriculture, and will ensure the continued success of British agriculture in the changing market place, the right balance between agricultural and environmental needs in the countryside and a prosperous rural economy. I commend them to the House.

5.21 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): This is an appropriate time for the House to be debating agriculture. As the Minister rightly pointed out, we do so as the Council of Ministers and the Commission are beginning their haggling over this year's price level. We do so as an important conference takes place here in London on world agricultural trade, and at a time when British agriculture is in considerable disarray.

I welcome the debate, although I feel that the juxtaposition of a discussion of the detailed Commission proposals and a debate on the state of agriculture in this country is not a happy one, because it means that many points with which I am sure the Minister would have liked to deal have gone without mention. I fully understand that. The Minister introduced the debate in his normal urbane and civilised manner, not surprisingly praying in aid on occasion the fact that he was involved in negotiations and therefore could not elaborate as he might have wished. We understand that difficulty but, equally, we feel that there are many points that we have the right to raise with him, and I hope that we can persuade him and his right hon. Friend to be a little more forthcoming later this evening.

I took the Minister's comments at the end of his speech in the spirit in which they were made. They were fair political points. There are differences of opinion between us, and we must acknowledge that. However, it is also important to stress that Opposition Members believe in British agriculture. We are prepared to support British agriculture, and we believe that in the long term our approach is more for the benefit of British agriculture than might appear from the Minister's comments.

I deal, first, with the point about the long-term benefits to British agriculture. I emphasise that we are beginning to

witness the real costs of the Prime Minister's capitulation at the summit in Brussels. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no!"] I know that Conservative Members object to that. There is a fundamental difference between us. Opposition Members believe that the Prime Minister lost her bottle; that she got frit, to use her word, and as a result threw away our bargaining chip. We shall not get another one probably for another five years. In the intervening period we must muddle along, trying to reform the CAP as best we can. The Prime Minister had always been regarded in Europe as a tough negotiator. Now that her bluff has been called, the task of wringing changes out of our European partners will be much more difficult. Her tough image is irreparably damaged.

As we contemplate the immediate future for British agriculture, we begin to notice the costs of the Prime Minister's concessions—costs which the Minister himself acknowledged. He repeatedly said, in effect, that arrangements had been agreed at Brussels and that we had to accept them as agreed at the summit meeting. He is quite right. All the stabilisers were agreed in principle as they lay on the table at Copenhagen at the previous summit. There had been no real debate about them previously. They were not discussed because people did not feel that they would be taken on board. We have had to take the shortcomings of the stabilisers on board without any real discussion.

I believe that if the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had been at Brussels at the side of the right hon. Lady we should not have got into the mess that we are in at the moment. The Minister has the unenviable task of trying to pick up the pieces and make sense of the reform of the CAP. He has to do that from a very weak bargaining position. He has admitted time and time again that when he has wanted changes in the agricultural scene he has been on his own. He has lost his bargaining power. We had a bargaining chip at Brussels, but we threw it away needlessly.

I have made a number of allegation and perhaps it is incumbent on me to justify my criticisms of the CAP.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will make a sensible speech and get back to his proper form. No doubt this is a bad patch. What is this marvellous bargaining chip, and who supports him, apart from one or two of his hon. Friends?

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman had not been so quick to jump to his feet he might have heard a sensible speech, and I hope that he will stay and listen. If he has not realised that the CAP—and the European Community—was bankrupt at Brussels, there is nothing that I or anyone else can do to get it across to him. It is as simple as that.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): If the hon. Gentleman is unhappy and believes that the common agricultural policy was bankrupt in Brussels, why does he not accept that stabilisers were the answer? For example, without the single sheepmeat stabiliser we would have lost our variable premium, which would have been absolutely catastrophic. What is wrong with the stabilisers as an answer if the CAP was going bankrupt?

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Lady had graced us with her presence during other agricultural debates—

Miss Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I shall give way in a moment.

Miss Nicholson: I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that I have been present at other agricultural debates—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speake. Do you now permit an hon. Member to whom the hon. Member who has the Floor has not given way to speak while that Member is still on his feet? Is that another of the double standards that are creeping into the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dr. Clark.

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Lady was present at previous debates—I accept that she must have been: I am sorry that I missed her—she cannot have been listening. The Minister will acknowledge that we have accepted the concept of meaningful stabilisers. We are critical of the operation of some of the stabilisers, and I want to explain why. We believe that they will harm this country's agriculture and the incomes of many of our less well-off farmers.

I was criticising the CAP because as the cost escalates the position becomes even more farcical.

"The situation has deteriorated so far that total public resources spent on agriculture through the Community and national budgets have reached a level which even not counting social security transfers, is now practically equivalent to the net income of the sector."

That is a damning comment, but I am afraid that I cannot claim credit for it. That view comes directly from the Commission itself, in volume 1 of its proposals on pricing for agricultural products in the coming year.

To rid it of Euro-jargon, it means that agriculture is highly subsidised, to an extent that could not even be contemplated in any other sector of industrial activity, in this country or elsewhere in Europe. It is a damning comment that the amount of public support for agriculture, through the Community and national budgets, is practically equivalent to the net income of the agricultural sector. That is a serious indictment, which we must address. We put forward our points of view today against that background.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): That information is very revealing.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) says, cynically, that that information is revealing. I accept that. The key point is that people in this country do not realise it. We do well to remember how much of our money and the money of our constituents goes to support the agriculture industry.

How can the Minister justify this situation? How does he advise us to explain to our constituents, who may have been miners, shipyard workers or steel workers, that it is wrong to subsidise their industry, but right to subsidise agriculture to this extent?

Conservative Members ought to listen to this. I accept that it is right to give some subsidy to agriculture, because the industry is vital to this country in more ways than one. Equally, I submit to hon. Gentlemen that the same argument can be made for the coal and shipyard industries.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No. I have given way twice already. I shall follow the lead of the Minister, as I have a lot to say. It is better that I make my speech and hon. Members then seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and make their own speeches.

Can the Minister tell us how we can justify the present system to farmers who receive only a third of agricultural support? The key factor is that a grossly expensive agricultural support system does not reach the farmers, who are at the sharp end. Only a third of the money goes to farmers, and the rest goes to storage and the likes of export restitution. How can the Minister defend that system and not seek a radical reform? The question is unanswerable.

I wonder where the Government stand on this issue. I listened very carefully to the Minister and though that I heard some indications. Did I detect a shift in Government policy for agricultural support? I listened carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman said today about the markets. I even listened to the philosophical guru of the agricultural Benches, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson). All his references at Question Time today to market forces got through to me. They burnt through to my soul. I thought, "Aha, perhaps there is a shift in Government policy. Perhaps they are moving away from almost unfettered support for agriculture." Are the Government really thinking of removing or reducing financial support for industry?

I read with great interest a speech made last week by the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at the annual dinner of the Grain and Feedstocks Association. He made some revealing comments to that august group. He is reported as saying that price cuts were his preferred option to reduce surpluses. How does that square with the Government's policy on the devaluation of the green pound, which is a price increase for farmers, rather than a price cut? The fundamental message in his speech came when he provided some insight into the Government's thinking on the reduction of intervention in the farming industry. He made the point that government was best when least obtrusive and involved. His general conclusion was that farm support ought to be reduced.

Further confirmation of that change in Government policy came yesterday from the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. I believe that the Treasury has some influence in these matters. The Minister was arguing that the experience of the deregulation of transport, financial services and mining in Britain had stimulated growth. He argued that deregulation could have a similar effect for agriculture.

It is fair to ask the Government at this early stage whether they are really contemplating a U-turn on agriculture. Because so many jobs are involved, and the lives of so many of our citizens will be affected, is it not time for the Government to come clean and start an open debate on the matter?

We on the Labour Benches would approach any rethinking on agricultural policy in an open and positive manner. I make that offer to the Minister. There is much at stake. It makes a lot of sense to strive for a policy based on common and agreed principles. If we could get consensus on some basic issues of principle, we might take the debate a stage further. Therefore, I ask the Minister to give us a little more information about his thinking on these matters. As he pointed out at the beginning of his speech, public subsidy to agriculture is increasing all the time. He gave a telling figure of 28 per cent. in the past few years. He used it for a different reason, but I use it in this context, too.

Continuing the theme of finance, I shall consider the cost of the CAP to the consumer. It is worth repeating it to the House, with all the legitimacy of a Treasury document to back me. It was issued and distributed at the time of the NFU conference, and it said that it cost the average household of four in Europe more than £10 a week to support the farming community.

The figure for the United Kingdom is even higher, because of our different trading patterns. As long ago as 1986, the university of Newcastle calculated the figure at £11·50 a week. I know that the figure is not very welcome to farmers in this country, but it is a fact promulgated by the Treasury. When the Minister accepted our amendment to the Government's motion on CAP reform in November 1987, we thought that, while he did not agree with the figure, he reserved his position. I fully concede that point, because I want to be fair. We believed that the Government genuinely shared our concern. I hope that that is still the case. However, I detected rather a different attitude by the Minister today, compared with his determined approach before he went to Brussels.

I shall say a few words about the green pound, because the Minister asserted our position correctly. The NFU argues, especially through its publication *British Farmer*, that the green pound is still the most critical issue facing British agriculture. I regard the NFU as probably the most effective trade union in the country. It has been remarkably successful over the years in persuading successive British Governments to back its proposals. It is more than a strange coincidence that sometimes the Ministry of Agriculture and the NFU speak in almost the same voice.

I can understand the determination of the National Farmers Union to maximise the income of its members, and I appreciate its arguments for devaluation of the green pound. There is no doubt that the system of green currencies has got somewhat out of hand, but I have some intellectual difficulty in accepting the duplicity of the NFU's approach. I shall explain what I mean.

On one hand the NFU is on record as supporting the concept of stabilisers, which is a means of cutting surpluses by price reductions. Obviously, for such a system to work effectively, the price cuts must hurt. Yet the NFU is on record as justifying its devaluation stance by claiming that at least 4 per cent. is needed to offset the effects of stabilisers on British farm prices. The two objectives are contradictory, and that casts doubt on the NFU's determination to tackle seriously the costly farm surpluses.

While I accept the NFU's claims that the farming industry is not so prosperous as it was, equally I use the Minister's arguments that the farming industry has had benefits in the past 12 months and will have benefits in the immediate future. The industry has the benefit of lower input costs—of fuel oil and so on—because of the strength of sterling. It has the benefit of a reduction in income tax —for some farmers, a reduction in income tax at the higher level. The industry has those benefits, as the Minister has pointed out.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Some farmers do not earn enough to pay tax.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman makes the point that some farmers do not pay tax. He represents a particularly difficult area for farmers, and his statement is correct. Many of his constituents are on low incomes and work hard in difficult terrain. I think I am right in saying that the average income for the Welsh upland disadvantaged area farmer is £4,617 a year.

Mr. Howells: I am one of them.

Dr. Clark: I thought that I was doing rather well in helping the hon. Gentleman, until he started adding his additional incomes. I think that I have made my point without the help of the hon. Gentleman, who is such an honest man.

Apparently, the Government agree with the NFU's approach. The Minister has said that he is in favour of a devaluation of the green pound. We are entitled to ask by how much. As the right hon. Gentleman pointed out, a devaluation in the green pound affects the cost of living of the rest of the community.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop: Trivial.

Dr. Clark: I shall return to that trivial point. Is that really the Government's position? How can they justify their support for the NFU's campaign to offset the cost of stabilisers by price increases to farmers through a green pound devaluation? I thought that the Government were serious about stabilisers, and here I return to the point that was made by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), which I may have misrepresented.

I listened carefully to the Minister. Will he confirm that the Governments of France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Greece have requested green rate devaluations? If they have, that negates any advantages that we in Britain may gain by our devaluation. One is then talking about rates of devaluation, and that is another reason why we want to know the rate on which the Minister has his eye.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I must continue. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will try to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Will the Minister confirm that the French, the Italians and the Irish have argued that a devaluation of their green currencies is a condition of any price package agreement? Is it true that the British Government have not taken that line? Am I right in believing that the Minister is not making a green pound devaluation a condition? Is his declared support for devaluation real, or a sham? The House needs to know where he stands.

The recent strengthening of the pound in foreign currency exchanges has made the case for the Minister's devaluation stance even weaker. On 22 April, in *Farming News*, the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) spelt that out clearly in words of one syllable for us all to understand. This strengthening led, ipso facto, to a corresponding devaluation of the green pound. Given that, surely there can be no justification for further devaluation, unless of course the Minister is not confident that the pound will remain strong over the next 12 months. For the House to make a decision, or even to offer an opinion, on the level of the green pound, we need to know where the Minister stands on this issue. Is the current strength of the pound temporary, or will it be permanent? The answer is crucial. Does the right hon. Gentleman side with the Chancellor or with the Prime Minister on this issue?

I happily offer the Minister my support on one small issue. There are sound technical reasons for the abolition of MCAs in the pig sector. In effect, it would mean a green pound devaluation in that sector. I hope that the Minister will press as hard as he can for that. He has our support. For the technical reasons which he explained so well, we believe that the pig regime is different.

I should like to conclude on the green pound issue—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—by mentioning the forgotten consumer. Obviously, Conservative Members will cheer at that, because they would like to forget the consumer. When I mentioned price increases, the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) said that they were trivial. They may be trivial, but, on the NFU's figures alone, it means 1p on the standard loaf of bread, 3p on a 250g pack of butter and an extra 4p per pound on beef. What does the Minister say to those of our constituents who are already on low incomes, who have been heavily penalised by the Government's policy and who have lost in the past 12 months through the Government's reform of social security and the housing benefit system——

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I would rather not give way, for the simple reason that I think it important that I make my speech and then allow others to make theirs.

When the poll tax is introduced, these people will be even worse affected. They will not have the benefits of any tax cuts, because many are on such poor incomes that they do not pay any income tax. If I may say so, they are like the farmers of mid-Wales. How can we argue for any further financial penalty in the form of higher food prices for the many pensioners, the long-term unemployed and the widows and widowers in constituencies such as mine who have lost under the Government's rigid reform of the social security system? Is it fair to suggest to widows with no capital, who were recently faced with a £15 cut in their already meagre income following the changes in the Government's rules, that there should be price increases to help the hard-up farmers?

It is ironic that some of the unemployed once worked in the shipyards and the coal mines before the Government withdrew the subsidies. That is a fair point which is often raised with me. A further irony, while I am on the subject of ironies, is that some of the people most severely affected by food price increases are the farm workers, who are among the lowest paid in Britain. In a sense, they have been the real forgotten farmers.

I freely acknowledge that all is not well in farming. The Government must accept some responsibility for farmers' difficulties. Farmers are completely bemused by the Government's lack of direction. The Government's policies have had the same effect on farming as on society as a whole. The past three Administrations under the Prime Minister have shown that the rich farmers are getting richer and the poor farmers are getting poorer. The small farmers in particular have suffered greatly under the Government.

The position of some farmers in the upland areas of Wales, Scotland and England—for example, Durham and

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Cumbria—is diabolical. Many farmers are on income support, or near to it. Many are deeply distressed at the Prime Minister's sell-out in Brussels on the sheepmeat regime. I use the word "sell-out" rightly, because even the Minister accepts that the sheepmeat regime discriminates against the British sheep farmer. No objective person could avoid that conclusion.

I shall now turn my attention to the set-aside issue. It is disappointing that we are having this debate without all the information being available to us. This is very serious. As I understand it, the EC conditions for set-aside have been agreed. I understand that they were agreed at the end of last week. I find it rather deplorable that although the issue was agreed at the end of last week, this debate is taking place without the documents and the details being available to hon. Members.

I shall ask the Minister one or two questions on the issue. Am I right in thinking that bare fallow will not be allowed? I should like an answer from the Minister. Does the Minister consider that the £16 million allocated to the scheme will be adequate? I wonder whether the Minister could develop a little further his attitude and his thinking about fallow grazing. If bare fallow is to be disallowed, only green fallow and grazing fallow are left. Therefore, the options are restricted. I understand that it is entirely up to the Minister whether there is grazing fallow. As has been shown by hon. Members during Question Time and in interruptions in the debate, there is deep concern about the effect of grazing fallow, especially on the farmers in the upland areas to which I have referred.

The concept of grazing fallow is admirable if we can contain the progeny issue. As the Minister knows, there are deep and serious anxieties about the operation of the scheme. We know that the hill farmers operate a monocrop system. We also know that they have no alternative. Even if grazing fallow is allowed at a 50 per cent. grant, it turns upside down the economics of sheep farming.

Perhaps I can use an example. Perhaps I can compare an average hill farm in Cumbria with 600 ewes with an average cereal farm in East Anglia of about 1,000 acres. The East Anglian farmer may put 200 acres into green fallow as grazing fallow set-aside. As I understand there is to be a limit on stocking on grazing fallow, he will be permitted to place approximately 400 mule ewes on that land. Given the nature of lowland farming, he would expect a lambing percentage of about 180. He would therefore stand to gain £8,000 under the set-aside scheme at 50 per cent. In addition, he would get a ewe premium of about £2,000, at £5 a ewe, and expect a variable premium on 720 lambs at £4 a lamb, amounting to £2,880. That means that there would be a total gain to the East Anglian farmer of £12,880. I accept that he would have some costs, but he would also be able to sell the lambs.

The Cumbrian situation assumes a small drop in lamb prices, due to the increase in lamb numbers, of perhaps £5 a head. In the upland areas it would be realistic to expect a lambing percentage of about 70, which means about 420 lambs, perhaps less 120 kept back for further breeding. The system would mean a loss to the Cumbrian farmer of £1,500. Assuming that there is a drop in the ewe premium of £1·80, which is likely, there will be another loss of more than £1,000.

I have spelt that out in some detail because only when it is stated in such stark detail do we realise why so many hill farmers are worried. On a simple comparison—I have used the rounded figures for simplicity—the Cumbrian farmer is more than £2,500 worse off, while the East Anglian farmer gains more than £12,500. Surely that cannot be right. It highlights the danger that can follow from grazing fallow.

Obviously the final details have to be worked out, but I hope the Minister will ensure that the House has a full debate on the set-aside issue before a final decision is taken, and before the final details are sorted out. I have not dealt with the environmental aspects and the other economic aspects that are affected by the set-aside issue.

I shall conclude with two thoughts. All hon. Members will agree that we are facing a period of great uncertainty. I should have thought that it was time for diversification and alternative methods of farming. I understand that that is the view of the Government. However, I do not understand why they appear to be intent on further slashing the research and development budget in agriculture, fisheries and food. As I understand it, the report on the review has been submitted to the Cabinet Office. I understand that it has been discussed by the Cabinet. If that is correct, and if the future of research and development is to be altered radically, with industry being encouraged to fund more research, more jobs will be lost.

The issue raises many questions. For example, does the industry have the ability to pay for research? I understand that the farming industry is under stress and under financial pressure, yet the Government want it to pay for more research. What influence will industry have in deciding the research topics? How will it be decided which research is to be classed as near market research? So far the review has been conducted in the utmost secrecy. The industry itself has not been consulted, nor have any interest groups affected, such as the trade unions and other pressure groups. I hope that before making any recommendations the Minister will come to the House, make a statement, and let us question him on the proposals.

I began my speech by referring to the fundamental challenges facing agriculture and by accepting that there is a difference of approach between the two sides of the House on many issues. I began by proclaiming the Labour party's concern and desire to keep British agriculture healthy. I applaud the Government's meagre efforts to reform the CAP. Our criticism is that they were not drastic enough.

I urge the Minister to persuade his colleagues in Europe that we must be much more serious about working in the international ambit. We must devote much more effort to making sure that agricultural issues are discussed within the context of world trade. I make the point that I hinted at in the course of my speech. We feel that there is common ground. We believe that the Government have sometimes been obsessed by secrecy. That is not good for the farming industry or for the House. We should like a much more open discussion, and I urge the Minister to ensure that during the period of readjustment and reform he takes the House and other interested parties into his discussions and listens to their opinions before reaching conclusions.

I think the Minister acknowledges that there have been issues that we have supported. I freely admit that we have given our full support to the environmentally sensitive areas scheme, which has been a successs. We welcome its

success, we want it to be more successful, and we are willing to help the Government in positive efforts to help British agriculture, but we always reserve the right to take a different approach on some of the issues.

5.58 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I was disappointed in the speech of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). I thought that he would get to the root of what is wrong. His speech was founded on the same fallacy as all the pages that we have had from the Community—I do not know how many, but the documents stand about four inches high. Like the speech of the hon. Member for South Shields, none of them explains the paradox that my right hon. Friend gave us at the outset. In the past eight years the Government have increased support to agriculture by no less than 28 per cent. in real terms. That is a huge increase. Every farmer in the land should be grinning all over his face with delight, but we all know that the opposite is the case. In the same period, farming net incomes have plummeted.

There is nothing new in that paradox. It began, sadly enough, soon after we launched a policy of price support some 40 years ago. That was done entirely in good faith. We believed that if we artificially raised the price of what the farmer produced, the extra money would go into his pocket and become an addition to his net income. Instead, in the past 40 years farming net incomes have gone down, in real terms, to one third of what they were before that policy.

Some of us are old enough to remember—the hon. Member Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) is very nearly old enough to remember—the days when, just after the war, young men could start serious farming with just a few hundred pounds and make a good livelihood. Today, they would need a hundred times more money in real terms to enable them to do so. In those intervening years—this is why I emphasise that the paradox is not new—300,000 farmers have gone out of business, and the annual review shows that they are still leaving at the rate of 2,000, 3,000 or 4,000 a year. I regret that, and I hope that all other hon. Members do so too.

The fact is that price support has not had the effect of supporting farms. It is high time that farmers and taxpayers were given some explanation of where all the money has gone. If one looks through the annual estimates for agriculture, one can easily tot up all the money that has gone to agriculture in the past 40 years. One can also estimate how much land values have gone up in the same period. The two figures come to exactly the same. We have lost the money that has gone in price support in inflated land values. That has been fine for somebody such as myself who has the good fortune to own a couple of farms, but it is harsh indeed for the small farmer, and particularly harsh for the tenant farmer, because the more land values rise, the more rents rise. With the aid of the annual review, one can see how that has happened. Even in the past eight years they have nearly doubled.

We must think seriously about whether the policy to which we have been pledged for so long is fundamentally right. I was more than delighted when my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food touched upon the root causes of the paradox. He is edging towards a much more sensible policy, and I hope that it will work. I am all in favour of set-aside, provided that it is constructive. Nothing would damage the reputation of farmers more than to be paid large sums of money for their land to lie idle. The money must be used for constructive purposes, and I am sure that that is my right hon. Friend's wish.

I also hope that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be much more active in extending ESAs. I appreciate that they are all an experiment, but some of us suspect that the Ministry—not my right hon. Friend, but those further down the line—are not going ahead with sufficient enthusiasm with that practical alternative by which we can lower the temperature of farming and give farmers real security by compensating them for any loss of profit that they suffer by farming differently and more constructively.

We all know—I think that the hon. Member for South Shields quoted a figure—that the average family is paying much of the price. The figure, accepted by the Treasury and everyone else, is about £11 for the average family. That is a serious amount. If we phased out price support, the average family would be that much better off a week. They would have £11 a week more spending money.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Does my hon. Friend accept that the figure that he has just quoted is based on wheat at £50 a tonne and that no such wheat is available? The cheapest wheat imported into Britain is £105 a tonne and wheat from other parts of the EC is as much as £177 a tonne. His figure is wholly fallacious.

Sir Richard Body: I dispute those figures. Only a few weeks ago I had the offer of some land at £7 an acre, and that was in Australia where land that can grow wheat at £50 an acre has gone out of cultivation. There has been compulsory set-aside and farmers have walked away from it. But there is land there that is now growing wheat at £45 an acre and they would gladly send it to this country at that price. I am not suggesting that it would all come in, but I am saying that we are deluding ourselves if we think that we are helping the farming community by pursuing a policy of price support, which manifestly has not supported more than half our farmers since it was introduced.

I am not arguing that no money should go to farming. On the contrary, I am saying, and have said often, that we have got agriculture into such a mess that a vast sum of public money is now needed to put it right. One of the things that has gone wrong is that we have brought into arable cultivation about 7 million acres—an area the size of Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire—of poor, grade 3, 4 or 5 land, which cannot possibly grow cereals economically. That is the root cause of the grain surplus that we have had for the past few years, which nobody in Britain wants to buy, certainly not the poor pig producers and dairy farmers who cannot afford it.

I have consistently argued that to put right the pattern of agriculture a large sum of money is needed—perhaps £2,000 million a year. I think that public opinion will accept that. I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister to a significant recent opinion poll which said that 78 per cent. of the British people would be willing for 1 per cent. of the national income—which is more than £2,000 million—to go to agriculture for purposes of protecting the countryside, conservation and so forth. That is a heartening prospect for farmers. It means that the British people are willing for an appreciable part of their

[Sir Richard Body]

income to go to agriculture and support it in a genuine way. If we extend the principle of ESAs and the constructive policy of set-aside—as my right hon. Friend is anxious that we do—we would be able to use such money for that purpose.

However, I fear that if we pursue that course we must also recognise that consumers have rights too, and it would be too harsh to expect consumers to be heavily taxed at £11 a week per family for more expensive food at the same time as contributing another £2,000 million a year.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will pursue the course of getting to the root of the paradox that has hurt agriculture for a long time. It may not have affected some of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), who may have been beneficiaries, but many other small farmers in Devon, Wales and elsewhere, particularly in the livestock sector, have gone out of business at the rate of several thousands a year. Our aim should be a more balanced agriculture, but one that is secure and stable. That will not come while we pursue a policy of supporting the products instead of the farmer and his farm.

6.9 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): It is always an honour to follow the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). We have both been in the House for many years and have disagreed on agricultural policy on nearly every occasion. I am old enough to remember the days when I lived on my father's 250-acre farm. My father's gross takings on that farm were £60 a year, out of which he paid a farm worker. We can turn the clock back 40 years if we want, but I would prefer to start on the farming ladder in the 1980s.

Little did I think, when I began my farming career back in the 1950s, that Welsh farmers would one day be told that they were producing too much. After all, for years the farming community had been encouraged by successive Governments to improve the land, invest in modern buildings and machinery and build up viable units to reduce our food import bill and ensure that Britain provided as much food as possible from its own resources. Farmers responded magnificently to those appeals. Over the past decade or two, the family farms in Britain—the basis of agriculture—have improved out of all recognition. They have turned themselves into efficient small businesses that make a vital contribution to the economy of rural Britain.

Welsh farmers find it difficult to accept with equanimity the fact that they have been penalised for their efficiency and for putting all their energies and capital into their life's work. There was a sad lack of foresight by the Government when they accepted and introduced schemes that could easily lead to the destruction of the family farm structure in Wales and the rest of Britain, and to many farmers' financial problems being made impossible.

It should be possible in 1988 to improve the marketing organisation of the European Community, dispose of unwanted surpluses and find alternative markets, without having to use the intervention system and put everything into cold storage. I was delighted when the Minister said that he has plans to remove many of the surpluses in the intervention system.

The intervention system has always struck me as a wasteful and shameful exercise, especially when millions of people are starving and young children are dying in their thousands every day through lack of food. Those of us who confess that we are Christians—some of us do—believe that, if there is a will, there is a way to help many of the starving people of the world.

One of the saddest aspects of the affair is the way in which such mismanagement of the common agriculture policy is turning people in Britain against the EEC and causing them to forget the advantages that membership has brought us. As a dedicated European, I feel sorry that many people are not taking advantage of what is happening in Britain. The Community has expanded the market for British goods, and it has ensured that there will never be any food shortages in the Community.

The common agricultural policy must be reformed. I agree with the efforts made by the Government, but they have not yet done enough. I am sure that it is not an impossible task, given the will to do it. There is far more to the European concept than its agricultural policy.

British agriculture is facing its worst crisis in recent memory. I do not think that hon. Members on either side of the House will disagree with that argument. For many of our farmers, the consequences of the crisis are dire. Many have seen their incomes fall to unacceptable levels. If I understood the Minister's opening remarks, he agrees with that view.

In 1987, United Kingdom farming income fell to its second lowest point since the war, and over the past five years the average decline has been 9 per cent. a year. The effect of that decline has been that during the past two years about 20,000 full-time jobs for farmers and farm workers have disappeared from the industry and investment has fallen by 30 per cent. to the lowest level since the mid-1950s. Last year, the number of full-time workers dropped below 100,000—to 96,000—for the first time.

I do not know whether it was a slip of the tongue—it is for the Minister to defend himself—but he said something that will agonise hon. Members on both sides of the House, and especially the agricultural industry. The Minister said that many more farmers will have to leave the land in Britain and in the Community. I am sure that he is aware that in France and Germany people working on the land represent 20 per cent. of the electorate. In Britain the number has reduced to just over 2 per cent.

In reply, will the Minister state whether he wants the 2 per cent. who are engaged in agriculture in Britain to decline to 1 per cent. or even 0·5 per cent.? It is a sad reflection on the industry when the Minister responsible for agriculture says that more farmers will have to leave this land of ours and go elsewhere to look for work. If the position is so serious, the Government should introduce schemes so that many of our farmers could become part-time farmers, and save our countryside and stop depopulation.

I draw the Minister's attention to this week's *Farming News*, which reports on the deepening crisis in mixed arable and pig units in north Humberside. Farm workers are being laid off in that region at an alarming rate. The report exaggerates little when it says that farmers, who are forced to take on the extra work themselves, are

"hanging on for grim death".

The people who remain in the industry have seen their incomes cut drastically in recent years. What I say next will be important to everyone in the House, as I believe that agriculture is more important than political parties. The leaders of the Farmers Union of Wales are today meeting the Secretary of State for Wales in Cardiff. The union has discovered that 37 per cent. of full-time farmers in the United Kingdom earned less than £5,000 last year, and more than half of them made a loss. Those are the figures given by the Inland Revenue, which also says that about 31,000 farmers earned less than £40 a week.

Something must be done to stop the decline. Whatever views the Minister holds, and whatever the Opposition spokesman thinks—I disagreed with many things he said—the industry is in dire financial trouble. The hon. Member for Holland with Boston said that more money must be given to the industry if it is to survive. That must be done soon.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I particularly want to draw the Minister's attention to the farmers on low incomes to whom my hon. Friend has referred and who he says constitute 37 per cent. of all farmers. Many of them have been receiving family income supplement and are now being transferred to family credit. Their assets of livestock and land are being taken into account, and many of them are therefore not receiving the benefit. So the social security reforms are another aspect that affects agriculture. These farmers will have to leave the land. It is a serious state of affairs.

Mr. Howells: That was a good intervention, even though it was a short speech. I am sure that the Minister will heed what my hon. Friend has said.

I said earlier that British farming is one of the most efficient industries in the world, yet the Government continue to deride farmers for overproducing. Their record of efficiency speaks for itself. Farm product prices have risen by only 51 per cent. in the past 10 years. Food prices in the shops have risen by 88 per cent. and prices generally by 120 per cent. Britain's farmers responded to the call from the Government to produce more and make Britain self-sufficient, but when they respond to the reverse call to cut back production they can only go so far. The industry is already demoralised, without criticism from those who should be defending it in Europe.

One step that would help to restore confidence in the industry would be an independent inquiry into the running of the common agricultural policy. British farmers have the right to know how their position compares with other farmers throughout Europe. That point was raised in Question Time this afternoon, and I am sure that when the Minister reads what I said he will take the lead in setting up a public inquiry in Europe to establish whether British farmers have the opportunity to compete on equal terms in Europe. That would be a step in the right direction and would allay many of the fears of Welsh farmers.

The way in which the Government allow the green pound to operate is crippling agriculture, and that must be changed before it causes further damage. Its current operation creates ludicrous problems—producers in this country are put at a tremendous competitive disadvantage by the heavy subsidising of food imports and the taxing of exports. It is little wonder that British farmers cannot understand what is happening. They see their livelihoods threatened and all they hear is talk from the Government—without action. I hope that the Minister will do something in the near future about the green pound. I assure him that my hon. Friends and I are behind his efforts to devalue the green pound soon.

There must be a concerted effort to achieve parity as soon as possible in all areas so that our industry can compete fairly in the markets of Europe. Our producers cannot be expected to compete in a single European market with one arm tied behind their backs.

The National Farmers Union of England and Wales has already been mentioned, as has the Farmers Union of Wales, but I have received a letter from the National Farmers Union of Scotland, which wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) saying:

> "I know that you are fully aware of the grossly unfair imposition imposed by the green pound on Scottish (British) farmers at this time, and the gap remains large despite the strength of sterling over recent weeks. The Government is using the green pound to keep food prices artificially low, and in doing so is hitting the producer rather than the retailer who has much *larger margins* if economies have to be made."

So the problems in Scotland are the same as those in England and Wales, and I am sure that the Minister will take heed of that request.

I said earlier and I say again that 12 months ago many hon. Members said that it would be most likely that we should have to introduce a quota on beef production. Here we are 12 months later and we have been told by the Meat and Livestock Commission that there will be a shortage of beef before the end of the year within the Community. The Minister gave figures for butter and dried milk today, and it is more than likely that there will be shortages of other products in the Community within the next year or so.

We can all say that the livestock market is buoyant now. Store cattle are selling exceptionally well; calves, in particular, are selling well because many are going to the continent, but there will be a shortage of beef in the near future, in my view. Whatever views we may hold on the introduction of stabilisers and set-aside policy, much more consultation should take place before the Government and our friends in Europe decide on a policy. A great deal of consultation is needed. If agriculture is to survive and we are to keep the small farmers alive in our countries and in the Celtic fringes, we need a 10-year plan for agriculture and parity within Europe.

It is well known that I am a farmer. Perhaps I can sum up my contribution by saying that I have been in the House for 14 years and a farmer all my life. Ten years ago, my income from the House of Commons was not enough to keep the family, but the money I received from the farm subsidised that income. Today, the money that I receive from the House of Commons subsidises the farm. The position is serious. I honestly believe that the Minister is doing his best; he is an honourable and sincere man, but what is needed is action, not words.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House of Mr. Speaker's appeal for brief speeches.

6.28 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): It is not for me to comment on the details of the income of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), but it is always a pleasure to follow him because

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

he speaks much good common sense based on his own experience. I endorse his remarks about our membership of the European Community and the importance of the smaller family farmer in the structure of agriculture.

One of the most significant features of the debate on agriculture is the growing recognition that we are no longer discussing only the level of farm incomes or even the cost of the common agricultural policy within the European budget. We are also considering the future structure of our rural areas in an economic and social context. It is about the fabric of the countryside that I want to speak.

The background is not particularly encouraging, but that, in itself, is not surprising. Most of us accept the need for greater financial discipline. Surpluses must be reduced to more manageable sizes. Although that adjustment is difficult and painful for many producers, within the overall requirements of the country and of the national farm, the various proposals outlined by my right hon. Friend—the introduction of stabilisers, a voluntary scheme for set-aside and no increases in prices for 1988-89—are necessary. I also recognise that Ministers have a difficult task in this respect.

As mentioned in the debate, the Government's White Paper shows that the United Kingdom's farming income in 1987 fell to its second lowest point in real terms since 1945. Over the past five years there has been an average decline in real incomes of 9 per cent. per annum. In the last two years alone, about 20,000 full-time jobs in agriculture have disappeared. In addition, many jobs have been lost in ancillary activities because of events such as the closure of milk processing plants.

Those are all examples of reductions in the level of job opportunities in the rural economy. An added dimension to the trend is that rural areas often already have high levels of unemployment. In my constituency unemployment is currently 14 per cent. Farming and associated enterprises and activities have long been one of the principal anchor points of our county's economy. As the House knows, it is essentially a livestock area and I should like to mention the effect of the proposed changes and recent trends in milk, beef and pig production.

As we know, pig farming traditionally operates in cycles of peaks and troughs. This trough seems to be longer and more pronounced than any of its pig trough predecessors. I hope that you can follow that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we look at the figures for my county showing the effect of this downward trend, we see that in 1978 there were 1,364 farmholdings with pigs forming part of the enterprise. The number has dropped by 36 per cent. in the last 10 years, so that today there are 867 such farmholdings. The total number of pigs on those farms has fallen from 105,000 to 85,000, a drop of 19 per cent. That reflects a reduction in the size of the breeding herds, the sows and gilts. This is a worrying trend. The pig production unit traditionally formed part of the mixed farming enterprise in counties such as Devon and Cornwall.

I did not object to the principle of milk quotas. Following their introduction, the profitability of milk production rose. That was essentially because hitherto farmers had not necessarily realised that the maximum output of milk did not equate to maximum profitability. The adjustment was essentially a one-off exercise and has now been achieved. We are now in a new situation in which there is a virtual standstill on milk prices, and that comes on top of a 19 per cent. quota cut since quotas were introduced. That has imposed considerable financial pressures on milk producers and had it not been for calf prices I doubt whether the financial position of the milk producers could have been sustained. Here again we run into the problem of the multiplier effect because beef producers in my part of the world are facing serious financial problems.

In part, those problems stem from the high price of calves and store cattle. The beef producer faces the prospect of a reduction in beef intervention prices and the abolition of the variable premium from January 1989. In that context I welcome the Minister's remarks about his attitude to the green pound intervention and about the posture that he will take in meetings of the Council of Ministers. Irrespective of that, one of the key questions is simply about the alternatives that can be used to sustain the rural economy and farming incomes, given the background of the proposed changes and the consequences that will result from them.

The Minister recently gave evidence to the Select Committee on European Legislation. He was pressed about the growth that there would be in rural employment if set-aside were to be fully implemented. He said:

> "Yes, I have been asking myself this question. It is, I think, difficult to judge. I would guess that at the end of the day the effect of set-aside will be marginal either way on rural employment."

My right hon. Friend was pressed further and asked to be more specific. I asked about the actual alternatives for land use that would stimulate employment in rural areas. My right hon. Friend replied:

> "I have seen in the West Country quite a number of tourist activities. This is not necessarily land that is set-aside, but I have a considerable number of developments of tourist activities, old houses converted into hotels and . . . horse related activities."

My right hon. Friend was correct about that, but he owes it to the House and to all those in agriculture who will be adversely affected in some way or another by these proposed changes to show a greater awareness of the difficulties that producers will undoubtedly face.

Not everyone will be able to grow trees as an alternative activity or to set aside land. Not everyone will be able to find a suitable tourism project to develop or a leisure and recreational pursuit on which to rely. There is a limit to the number of golf courses, horse-related business activities, farm museums and theme parks that a rural economy can sustain—highly desirable as those developments may be. There are also problems in connection with local planning authorities. The Minister has a responsibility to ensure that dilatory planning authorities become more responsive to the changing needs of rural economies.

I conclude by again emphasising to the Minister that there is considerable uncertainty among producers about their future. That is understandable, given the changes that have been made and are being made to adjust to changing circumstances that we all acknowledge. I welcome my right hon. Friend's positive attempts to lead along the path of diversification. He must demonstrate a clear perception of his objectives to the producers. They are the people that he is anxious to convince that they do have a real role to play in maintaining the structure of the countryside as we know it and wish to see it developed in the future.

6.39 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): When we examine the 5 in of solid paper that we are supposed to be debating today, the need for diversification into wood production becomes apparent just to supply the paper needs of the bureaucracy of the European Community.

However, on a serious note, hidden within that kilo or so of paper are some documents with grave potential for agriculture in the United Kingdom, particularly for the farmers on marginal hill farms, who are livestock farmers with little or no real chance of diversification, and very many of whom I represent. Farm incomes have dropped drastically in the past few years. That drop is, of course, more damaging to those already on low incomes and once again affects most seriously the livestock farmer in upland areas.

Community price proposals will reduce beef production by abolishing the beef variable premium from next January. This will hit United Kingdom farmers, particularly in areas such as Clwyd, South-West. We are the only country that has variable premiums. Others buy into intervention, and therefore the United Kingdom will as usual come off worst. Monetary compensatory amounts exacerbate the situation, taxing producers and denying fair competition for our producers in Europe.

Sheepmeat production is probably the most important provider of jobs and plays an important role in the preservation of the countryside in large areas of my constituency. We have heard that the vast amounts of Eurocash being spent on the common agricultural policy are not cost-effective. Both the farmer and the housewife obtain value from the variable premium scheme for sheep, and it will be detrimental to both if it is removed.

Control of production is required, but the present measures are likely to have a twofold effect on farmers dependent on sheep.

First, measures to reduce production in other areas that desperately need control, such as cereals, are likely to drive lowland farmers into sheep and grazed fallow, and such moves will turn into a stampede.

Secondly, that will push the United Kingdom flock over the stabiliser limit and the twofold effect will be disastrous for marginal hill farms and for the conservation of our upland areas. Surely one sector of an industry that is in surplus should not have its problems solved at the expense of another.

The Minister claims that some devaluation of the green pound will take place. This will help the farmer, although once again it will help the better off more than the less well off. I am sure that the long-term interests of most farmers in my constituency would be better served by some form of income support based on the continuation of their responsible care of the rural environment. Environmentally sensitive areas are welcome, but set-aside properly administered could be a godsend to hill farmers squeezed by low incomes and arable replacement by lowland farmers.

Set-aside with safeguards to protect wildlife, landscape and archaeological features of farms, with maintenance plans taking in the whole of the farm and avoiding intensification on other parts of the farm, but with adequate payment for the farmer, must be the only answer in the long term that will not destroy the fabric of large areas of the rural parts of my constituency.

6.43 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): I was encouraged this afternoon, as was the House, by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, particularly by his acknowledgment of the serious situation facing agriculture and by his tough and realistic approach to the negotiations in Brussels in the weeks ahead. I intend to refer to some of the problems facing agriculture, particularly in the light of my right hon. Friend's comments and open acknowledgment of the difficulties, although I shall not detain the House for long.

I shall not repeat my right hon. Friend's comments about incomes. We face similar problems in Scotland, as I am sure he will acknowledge. The real value of net farm incomes is now only about 33 per cent. of the 1977 figure. This again shows the difficulties that we, like farmers in Wales, now face. However, as my right hon. Friend acknowledged, that pattern is not the same in different parts of the country. He mentioned East Anglia, where he comes from, and I wish to mention the Grampian area of Scotland, where I come from. Last year, the harvest there was probably more disastrous than in any other part of the United Kingdom, and the problem of indebtedness is serious. I have made those points before and simply wish to emphasise them again.

There has been a massive deterioration in recent years in the agriculture asset base. It is critical to consider that in terms of the long-term future of the industry. We have seen, on the one hand, increased borrowing and, on the other, lower land values. For example, over recent years that asset base—it is on that base that any industry judges its prospects for the future—has diminished by about 50 per cent.

This is not simply a question of moaning or crying wolf. In these debates we set out the facts to enable proper judgments to be made. What is to be done? I know from practical experience that in the negotiations my right hon. Friend must be guided by the agreement in Brussels in February.

The remarks of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) left me with niggling doubts and complete uncertainty about what alternative he would offer to tackle that problem. He appeared to be grudging about progress so far. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will stand up for United Kingdom interests in the broad framework agreed in Brussels in February. He must ensure that there is no deterioration in those matters of prime interest to British agriculture, in view of claims made by other European Ministers.

My right hon. Friend covered a number of matters, including set-aside. I want to concentrate on the green pound because, given the background of the Brussels agreement in February, this is crucial to British agriculture in the forthcoming negotiations. The green pound is overvalued, as my right hon. Friend acknowledged. The British farmer is receiving less than his competitors and, most important, the terms of trade in agricultural products are to the disadvantage of United Kingdom producers. My right hon. Friend will know that that is not a new phenomenon. It has been going on for several years and has been a major contributor to the current weakness and malaise of British agriculture.

It is acknowledged that the worst affected sector is pigs. Earlier this year the subsidy on bacon imported from

[Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith]

Denmark and Holland was as high as £70 a tonne. The situation has improved because the pound has strengthened, but that does not remove the need for action.

Will the pound remain strong? I shall not enter into that debate here, because it would not necessarily take us very far. What matters is that in future the strength of the pound could deteriorate, and I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that in the negotiations in Brussels he takes the green pound to such a level that if there is a deterioration we do not go back to those huge export subsidies which our competitors in Europe enjoy. Therefore, I urge my right hon. Friend to achieve, as far as possible, at least a neutral position, and as soon as possible.

There is a cost in this, but there is also a benefit. Every 1 per cent. of devaluation means an extra £50 million increase in the incomes of British farmers, who are so pressed. There is a cost to the Exchequer of between £8 million and £9 million for every 1 per cent. change, but that is a small price to pay to help this major industry in its difficulty. One can always come up with objections—for example, the cost of living and food prices, a point made by the hon. Member for South Shields. However, as my right hon. Friend did, let us get this into perspective. A 1 per cent. devaluation is about 0·2 per cent., or one fifth of a penny in the pound, on food prices. It is about 0·02 per cent., or one fiftieth of a penny in a pound, on the retail prices index. In those circumstances, we need a devaluation of between 9 and 10 per cent. That is about one third of a penny in the pound on the RPI and it is necessary to sustain this great industry.

Some Labour Members may say that this is inflationary, but let us remember that over the past 10 years the retail prices index has gone up by 120 per cent., while the farmgate price has gone up by only 50 per cent. This means that agriculture has made a massive contribution to the Government's achievement of their objective of bringing down prices and inflation. Agriculture has served this country. Let us now, in our turn, see that the Government and the country serve agriculture.

6.52 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): In this important debate, I shall concentrate on the effect of agricultural policies not only on agriculture but on the agricultural and rural communities of the countries of Britain. Agriculture is an important employer in Wales. In rural Wales, it is a vital industry in terms not only of the number of people employed directly on farms, but of those employed in ancillary industries such as creameries. We have seen the effect of certain policies on those creameries in recent years, and on the small businesses and families who depend on agriculture.

The policies of the past 30 years have had a dramatic effect on rural Wales. In those years thousands of people have left rural Wales, leading to massive rural depopulation, to the break-up of many rural communities and the consequent pressure that that puts on the traditions of rural life, the way of life of those communities, and, in parts of Wales, on the Welsh language. Therefore, it is important for us to consider not only the economic impact of agricultural policies but the social, linguistic and cultural consequences.

We have heard a great deal about different sectors of agriculture, but it must be remembered that Wales and Scotland, and parts of England and Northern Ireland, are primarily livestock producing areas and that the consequent effect of pressure on those sectors makes it difficult for those farmers to retain their livelihoods, because they have little room for manoeuvre if they wish to move into other sectors. That is why I shall concentrate on what is happening in the beef, sheep and milk sectors and how that affects our farmers.

The beef sector has already been highlighted in the debate. It is interesting to note that, although for years we have been talking about a potential beef surplus, the industry believes that there is a shortage of quality beef coming on the market. In view of the potential crisis, I ask the Government to give a significant boost to the suckler cow premium. As has been said, about 12 per cent. of our calves are being exported, and they are sometimes the best quality calves. Therefore, in years to come, the quality of our beef stock will suffer immensely. I urge the Government to consider a substantial improvement in the premium.

The crisis which faced the milk sector in 1983, 1984 and 1985 through the initial imposition of milk quotas has in some ways subsided. However, there remains the significant problem, which the House should consider, of the transfer of milk quotas between farmers. The main reason why milk quotas are being transferred from farmer to farmer is the total failure of the outgoers scheme. The original intention of the scheme was to reduce overall milk production in the United Kingdom. That is not happening. Rather than being reduced, milk production is being moved around the country, with the significant effect that small producers in places like Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are feeling the pinch because they are in financial trouble. The large milk producers are buying up milk quotas and, increasingly, milk production in the rural areas is lost. I urge the Government to look at ways in which that can be prevented.

The sheep sector is of major importance for Wales. I warn the Government that the problems in this sector, unless we get it right, could make those of the milk sector pale into insignificance. Some 80 per cent. of farmers in my constituency keep sheep. Therefore, the importance of sheep to Wales is obvious, and the Government understand that and should act upon it.

We could face real trouble as a result of the agreement in the cereal sector and the introduction of green fallow and grazing fallow. In fairness, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said that there would be significant problems over the introduction of the grazing fallow. Let us make one thing clear: the introduction of the grazing fallow shows that the muscle of the cereal growers, in having this on the agenda in the first place, is significantly greater than that of sheep producers. The cereal growers are an important lobby and the importance of that lobby has put that issue on the agenda.

We have the awful prospect of cereal growers being subsidised for not growing cereals, and being entitled to move into other sectors such as the sheep sector. If that happens, sheep will quickly be in surplus. Something should be done now to protect our sheep producers, and the Government should reject any proposals to bring grazing fallow into operation in the United Kingdom.

There is already a massive increase in the number of sheep being kept. For example, in the first eight weeks of

this year's lambing season alone, £48·5 million was paid out in the variable premium, whereas the total sum for last year was only £105 million. Last year there were 2,000 new wool producers, and if one allows cereal growers to keep sheep that will have a significant impact. If there is an increasing squeeze on sheep producers, family farms in rural Wales and in other rural areas of Britain will be under threat. The Government should act now.

The overall position of the varible premium and of the ewe premium in the Brussels negotiations should tax the Minister's mind greatly. We know that there will be problems in introducing sheep quotas and realise that they will create severe policing difficulties. However, the Government have a duty—in my view, a primary duty—to protect the traditional sheep farmer who has nowhere else to turn if there is a surplus and a knock-on effect. The traditional sheep farmer in rural Wales will suffer significantly if no agreement is reached in the Brussels negotiations.

My penultimate point concerns the green pound. I shall not detain the House unduly because other hon. Members have already spoken eloquently about that subject. However, I would ask the Minister, when he replies, to give the House some idea of the level of devaluation that he considers necessary, bearing in mind that the NFU recently called for a 9 per cent. devaluation.

Finally, at a crucial time for agriculture, research and development becomes of increasing importance. If farmers are not to be allowed to follow the traditional path and are compelled to consider other methods and sectors of production, it is vital that they receive the best possible advice. That means good research and development. Will the Government give an assurance that research establishments in England, Scotland and Wales will be maintained and expanded? Also, will the Minister tell the House when he expects to receive the results of the Barnes review of research and development in Scotland? We implore the Government, with all the passion at our command, to consider the problems of rural areas, particularly in respect of their agriculture industries, and to take up many of the issues that have been raised in this debate.

7.2 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I am glad that I have this opportunity of following the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) because, judging from his remarks, the northern area of my constituency is like his constituency. Last Saturday I met members of the Whitby NFU, who knew of this debate. They made a number of points, and I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend the Minister has dealt fairly and squarely with most of them. I shall certainly make sure that his remarks are put before them in due course.

I was sorry to hear the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)—I regret that he is not in his place—say that the Government had thrown away a unique opportunity at Brussels. He cannot understand the processes of Brussels, because if one enters into negotiations there expecting 100 per cent. success, the only certain thing is that one will achieve nothing. The successful future of the Common Market and of the CAP, whatever changed form it finally takes, will largely be due to the determination of our Government, particularly during their presidency.

We went as far as we could, and the successes I believe we shall achieve—and we all give our good wishes to my right hon. Friend the Minister in his further negotiations—will stem from the fact that we knew how far to go at the appropriate time. We are now taking up the fight again on those points which we believe to be so important. In other words, we did not throw away a unique opportunity at Brussels. We played it right, and it is an ongoing game in which we shall continue to have an important role to play.

The farmers in my constituency are worried by a number of the factors which right hon. and hon. Members have touched on in this debate. The devaluation of the green pound ranks high among their problems. My right hon. Friend the Minister spoke about the MCAs and the problems of securing agreement because of the varying circumstances in each member country. We, too, have varying circumstances, which no Minister can himself manipulate. None the less, those circumstances exist.

I hope that in any discussions my right hon. Friend has, it will never be forgotten that the rates of interest all our farmers have to pay at the bank are very different from those paid by our competitors in Europe. That is an important factor in pricing policy.

Farmers in my constituency are also very worried about set-aside. Beef and sheep producers feel that that is the only stock they can rear on their farms and the only type of farming they can do. They have always done it, and are doing it now, and it represents their only hope for the future. Others who might be persuaded to enter beef and sheep production might do so only temporarily, and it would be fatal if their temporary incursion were to cause lasting damage to those farmers who will always have to depend on beef and sheep farming for their livelihoods. I shall say nothing about the subject of pig farming, because enough has been said already about how seriously those concerned, who include pig farmers in my own constituency, view that aspect of production.

There has been no reference so far to diversification. One of the problems affecting it will be the attitude of planners. If one is diversifying, there will be a change of use, and old buildings might have to be altered for new uses. There may even be questions about whether roads are suitable for tourists in certain parts of the country. It would be tragic if farmers seeking to diversify, as they are encouraged to do, found themselves bumping up against objections from planning authorities. I hope that those concerned with planning in country areas will make sure that they have the machinery set up to help, as sympathetically as they possibly can, those farmers seeking to diversify. In that way, they will be of great benefit to their own countryside.

7.8 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I wish to say a few words about reforming the common agricultural policy and about the set-aside proposals, particularly in respect of grazing fallow, which is a serious matter for my constituents. I start by quoting from a recent Consumers Association report concerning the common agricultural policy, which described it as

"one of the most anti-consumer policies of all time."

In considering agriculture, we tend always to think of the farmer—the producer—and hardly ever of the consumer. As has been said several times already, the CAP costs the average European family £710 a year. That figure

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was given in the *Which?* report. How can such a policy be justified when £10 or £11 a week is being paid by each family in this country?

The report also comments that the arrangement hurts low-paid families much more than those with average incomes, because such families—pensioners' families, for instance—spend proportionately more on food. The Consumers Association concluded that, in the longer term, the only way to reform the CAP was to bring down support prices to a point at which surpluses were no longer created. That applies in all other industries: agriculture is singularly cushioned in this respect. In the long term, it must be the sensible course.

As I said earlier, seen from the consumer angle, there can be no justification for the CAP. It would have been much more appropriate to hold a debate tonight not on agriculture, but on food and food prices and the effect on rural communities. Those factors affect most of the population. As the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) said so eloquently, during the past few decades the effects of farming policy in Wales have meant massive rural depopulation.

Earlier the Minister admitted that the drift from agriculture would continue. He said that with equanimity and complacency, as if it were a fact of life about which he could do nothing. In comparison with the rest of Europe, however, that drift has gone far too far already in Britain. The thrust of any agricultural policy must surely be to try to preserve rural communities and small farmers.

The CAP was devised originally to protect small farmers: that is the incredible irony and dishonesty of what has happened in the past 20 or 30 years. Initially, in 1960, there were 17 million farmers in the nine EEC countries. Now the figure is down to 7 million. In Britain, 430,000 people derive their livelihoods from agriculture, and that number is falling by 9,000 every year. That is the pace of decay in agriculture.

Unfortunately, the Government allow the relentless drift from agriculture to continue. We know that that is happening, despite the enormous subsidy—the £11 per week per family, the £20 billion cost of the CAP and the £4 billion that comes from the British taxpayer and consumer. Agriculture derives a larger subsidy from the taxpayer than the whole of manufacturing industry. The subsidies to British Rail, British Steel and the coal industry, and regional aid, are dwarfed by it.

The money that goes to agriculture, however, is spread out very unevenly. It is based almost entirely on production, which means that the big producer receives an enormous benefit, while the small farmer derives very little. It is tied to land ownership. Six per cent. of farmers own 45 per cent. of the land, so half of any money that we put into agriculture will go to fewer than 10 per cent. of farmers.

In any reform of the CAP, we need targeting, if I may use the Government's word. I do not believe in it when it comes to social security, when money is taken from the poor to pay for the richest. In agriculture, however, we have the reverse of targeting. The taxpayers' money is going to the very rich farmers. There is the awful distortion of the big farmers deriving hundreds of thousands of pounds a year in subsidies. Co-existing with those millionaire farmers are farmers in the poorer rural areas of Wales who are driven to the wall and out of business. We drastically need a redistribution of resources away from the rich farmers to the poor ones.

We were not told the numbers involved, but one of the announcements that we heard this evening concerned the devaluation of the green pound. I cannot agree with such a devaluation simply because it is a blanket benefit to all farmers. A farm that is 10 times as big as another will derive 10 times the benefit. That cannot be justified. Every 1 per cent. devaluation means £50 million. A 9 per cent. devaluation means £450 million being taken from some part of the British economy.

In the past month or so, social security changes have been announced. Apparently we have not the money to give the pensioners and the low-paid, and we have learned of the cruelties of the social fund. How can that and the deterioration in our health services be squared with giving money to these farmers? I would agree with it entirely if the money went to small farmers, but unfortunately half of it will go to only 10 per cent. of farmers.

Two months ago, the Prime Minister returned from Brussels championing the success of her negotiations, and trumpeting her success in limiting the budget. But, as was conceded earlier, devaluing the green pound is simply a way of countering or neutering the effects of that—a way of getting back the money that was conceded in Brussels. The Consumers Association has concluded that the only sensible long-term reform of the CAP must involve guaranteed prices in Europe coming into line with market realities—if I may use a phrase used by Ian MacGregor during the coal miners' dispute. The market realities in Europe are that we are producing 15 per cent. more food than we need, and prices are well above world prices. Stabilisers will help, and I am delighted with that major step forward. The amounts agreed—160 million tonnes for cereals, for instance—were too high; too much ground was given in Brussels. Nevertheless, the principle holds considerable hope for the future.

As 15 per cent. of land needs to be declared redundant, farmers are asking what else they can do with the land. The Government are being very weak about giving a direction to those farmers, who do not know which way to turn. They know that there is a crisis and that they cannot carry on as they are, but the Government are providing very little leadership. They seem to have no policy to offer the farmers, bumbling from one little step to the next.

Woodlands obviously have a major role to play. I have been involved in Committee with the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill, which is a very timid affair. We talk about 12,000 hectares a year when we know that 4 million hectares are redundant and it would take 300 years to diversify at that pace. We need at least 10 times the commitment to that.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The hon. Gentleman devoted the first part of his speech to saying that his constituents needed more help and the second part to decrying the level of Government expenditure. Is there not something slightly ironic there? Do those two parts fit together?

Mr. Williams: As was said by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body)—I am sorry that he is not in his place, but this was very much the thrust of his

excellent speech—the money that now goes to agriculture needs to be redeployed and used to solve the problems of agriculture, especially as it is going to rich farmers.

Woodlands certainly have a major role to play, but we are far too timid and the action that the Government are taking is on far too trivial a scale. The consumer would very much like to see de-intensification of agriculture and cutting down on the use of pesticides and fertilisers, especially in areas where there are serious problems of nitrate pollution and where nitrogenous fertiliser should not be used, for the sake of human health and safety and the preservation of our water supplies.

As has already been said, the Ministry is very much in the pocket of the NFU, which is a very effective pressure group. Where do their policies differ? The consumer is in favour of de-intensification and a tax on the use of pesticides. The Government should look at what is happening in Europe. In Sweden there is a tax on the use of pesticides and a very heavy tax on fertiliser usage. It needs to be a heavy tax to cut down its use, and there are strong environmental arguments to justify such a tax. There is now a trend towards organic farming and, among consumers, towards organic, healthily grown food. Food can be grown perfectly economically with far less use of pesticides and fertilisers. Again, Government thinking is at a very elementary stage. They are pussyfooting around without any real commitment or direction.

I feel very unhappy about set-aside in a moral or ethical sense. It is fundamentally immoral to declare land redundant. It is like declaring people redundant—and this Government, of course, have no compunction about that. I feel that set-aside is a wrong policy anyway, whatever type of set-aside it may be.

I am particularly concerned about the idea of grazing fallow. Perhaps there is an argument for green fallow, the rotation of crops and the 15th or 17th century idea that in one year in five one should not grow anything. But the implications of what we have heard so far of Government thinking on grazing fallow would spell disaster in my constituency and many other less-favoured areas.

The idea, as I understand it, is that in the fertile cereal-growing areas farmers could be given about £50 to £200 per hectare to turn to grazing and produce sheep meat or beef. Sheepmeat is not in surplus; it is just about in equilibrium at the moment. Therefore, any extra sheepmeat produced in cereal-growing areas would threaten to lead to a surplus. We do not really need it, and it would simply exacerbate the problems of the CAP.

Far worse would be the effect on areas such as those in Wales, because it would mean that we were subsidising lowland farmers to drive upland farmers out of business. That, in summary, is what grazing fallow means.

I hope that the Government will take seriously the comments made in the debate and any representations made by farmers in our areas.

7.25 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): As the largest single industry in Northern Ireland, employing 13 per cent. of the total work force, directly or indirectly, agriculture plays a vital role in the economy of Ulster. The crucial importance to Northern Ireland of the future well-being of agriculture must be recognised by the Government in their dealings with the European Commission and the Council of Ministers. At the moment the outlook for Ulster farmers is very bleak indeed. Ulster farms are largely small family farms, and they are the backbone of the industry in Northern Ireland. They are now being seriously threatened by factors that are beyond the farmers' control. With little or no alternative means of earning a living open to many farmers in Northern Ireland, it is imperative that action is taken to preserve the rural infrastructure.

Suggestions from some quarters that farmers should diversify—for example, go into tourism—are in many cases simply not practical in Northern Ireland. Our indigenous population is much too small for diversification into tourism and, because of the continuation of the troubles, there is unlikely to be a vast influx of tourists to the Province, although we welcome the increase in tourism there. Therefore, Northern Ireland is not in a position to benefit in the same way as other European countries or the mainland here from schemes to diversify into tourism.

Similarly, the suggestion that farmers in Northern Ireland should get involved in forestry as a means of diversification is not likely to attract any small farmer. He would have to wait a very long time to see any return on his initial outlay and investment if he tried to diversify into forestry.

Options which are open to agriculture elsewhere in Europe are simply not available to the farming community in Northern Ireland. Given that fact, it is essential to address the very real problems being experienced in the industry in Northern Ireland. It seems to me to be a terrible step for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to announce that from 1 October farmers in Northern Ireland will no longer have the advice services of the Department of Agriculture, unless they pay for them. Up to now, such services have been free of charge, but from 1 October farmers must pay for them. This will undoubtedly lead to advice not being sought, because the farmers' financial position is very serious indeed. I had a meeting with some farmers recently, and they brought their bank manager along. They put their accounts on the table and I was appalled at the plight of the farming community.

The European Commission's farm price proposals contain some measures that are detrimental to Northern Ireland farming interests. In particular, the proposal for no change in the valuation of the United Kingdom green pound will have serious repercussions in Northern Ireland. I welcome what the Minister said today, and I urge him to seek a substantial devaluation in the United Kingdom green pound during his discussions and negotiations in the Council of Ministers. I should like to know what percentage he has in mind for devaluation.

Farmers in Northern Ireland and in the United Kingdom generally have no objection to competition, but they must be allowed to compete in the market on a fair and equitable basis and not be placed at a disadvantage compared with farmers in other member states.

We have heard prices of cereals quoted in the House today. Many hon. Members are unaware that, because of transport costs, all farmers in Northern Ireland have to pay £13 or £14 per tonne more than farmers in the United Kingdom. How then can farmers compete in the Common Market? I must confess that I am opposed to the Common Market. I always have been, and always will be. We had a large intensive industry of pigs and poultry in Northern Ireland but it has been slashed by 50 per cent. because we cannot buy grain on the world market. However, I do not want to go into that controversy today.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

For dairy farmers, the present milk quota regime has led to many difficulties. I agree with the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) that the larger producer has done well, but the small family farm is now in jeopardy. If something is not done for the small family farm in Northern Ireland, many thousands of farmers will go to the wall. Many of us fought hard for the extra allocation of 65,000 tonnes of milk from the EEC. If that had not been spread over the entire United Kingdom, but had come fully to Northern Ireland, we would not be in our current state. The super-farms on the continent are nothing more than milk factories. They get away with it, while the small farmer in the United Kingdom goes to the wall.

With the milk quota regime in place, the further proposal from the Commission to extend the milk co-responsibility levy for a further two years is unacceptable and should be resisted by the Minister in his discussions in Europe. It is an extra tax on milk producers which they should not be asked to pay when one realises the considerable constraints under which they already have to operate.

In the beef industry, once again there is a proposal to end the United Kingdom variable premium. I am on record in the House and in the European Parliament as condemning the proposal, which the Commission has been forced to take back on previous occasions. The premium compensates producers when the market price falls below the target scale. It also ensures that the price is kept down for the consumer. We have heard much tonight about the interests of consumers, and rightly so. However, the intervention system increases the price to the consumer, by taking beef off the market. The variable premium provides benefits for producers and consumers. It should be retained rather than be phased out simply to bring us into line with the rest of the EEC.

I want to stress the tragedy that has occurred within our pig industry. It has been cut to 50 per cent. and Northern Ireland has become the dumping ground for pigmeat from Holland. The Dutch have trebled their pig industry, while ours, as I have said, has been cut by 50 per cent. Before joining the Community, Northern Ireland was able to buy cheap cereals on the world market. Now, it is forced to import dearer feedstuffs and, as a result, cereals are very expensive.

What is the Minister's commitment to the abolition of MCAs on pigmeat? He told a deputation from Northern Ireland that he was interested in this issue. Is it true that in France the MCAs on pigmeat have been phased out?

The time has come to look at the pigmeat that is imported into Northern Ireland from Holland. Why is it —perhaps the Minister can tell me—that meat from Holland is not inspected? The Ulster Farmers Union, a deputation of which I met this morning before coming to the House, told me that it had been in touch with the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland, which said that such matters were not its responsibility. The Department said that it was the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services. The deputation went to the DHSS and was told that such matters were not its responsibility either. Therefore, we have uninspected pigmeat coming to Northern Ireland. The pigmeat that is exported from Northern Ireland is carefully checked and examined, while pigmeat coming in is not inspected, and the two Departments wash their hands of any responsibility.

Northern Ireland has been fortunate. It has been free from swine fever for a long time. The time has come for the Department to do something about this matter. I understand that swine fever could come to Northern Ireland through contaminated pigmeat.

The farmers in Northern Ireland will wait with interest to hear the Minister's reply. Some of the things that he said today were encouraging, and I was glad to hear him make such remarks.

7.37 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): It is probably opportune that I should follow the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) who so eloquently described the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland. I should like to re-emphasise what he said: agriculture is the base industry upon which most of our people are sustained. It sustains the farmers, their families, their communities and their entire environment.

I am what is called "book-learned" on agriculture. That is a Northern Ireland expression meaning that I have no practical knowledge of the industry. However, in my former occupation as a professional adviser I was aware of the greatly deteriorating real income being suffered by the farming community. Since becoming a Member of the House, representing an entirely rural constituency, I have been inundated day by day by matters concerning the plight of the small farmer. I have been concerned with the plight of the farmer with 40 or 60 acres, the hill farmer and the family farmer who are all suffering greatly.

The sector that is most at risk and is teetering on the verge of collapse is the pig industry. Producers in Northern Ireland are producing animals at a loss of £4 to £6 per head. Obviously, they cannot sustain a continuing loss of that nature for any time.

The plight suffered by the industry can be shown by the fact that about 10 years ago there were 24,000 producers and now there are only 4,000. The pig population has been decimated by 50 per cent. Most of that is due to what is seen as the unfair competition from the northern European countries, arising from the MCA differential. As has been said, until last month that was giving continental producers a hidden subsidy of almost £60 to £70 per tonne and now, fortuitously in a sense, it has been reduced to £45 per tonne as a result of the exchange rate fluctuation. That is still an enormous disadvantage. When added to feed costs, import costs and additional transport costs when produce is sent out again, it gives rise to very heavy overheads indeed.

I was pleased to hear the Minister say at Question Time that he was resolved that the MCAs should be reduced to nil as soon as possible. I asked him then whether he could extend the export restitution so that not just Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole, but the whole European Community could expand into new markets—particularly in the Third world.

Perhaps one of the most unjust systems applying to farming in Northern Ireland is the milk quotas system. We seem to be locked into a decision made some years ago which seems to be immutable. The dairy farming community in Northern Ireland is small and, because of its size, farms have tended to pass from family to family and

from farmer to farmer. However, that community is now locked into a fixed position. None of the cases concerning milk quotas that I have referred to a tribunal seeking the alleviation of hardship has been successful. I have not been successful in getting quotas reallocated in one single case. No real revision of adverse circumstances arising from the quotas is possible for the producer.

Quotas are also stifling new blood and new ideas in the industry. The young farmer can no longer get into the dairy business. He lacks the capital and purchasing power to buy quotas. The new generation of dairy farmers will not succeed unless something is done to alleviate matters and allow more fluidity in the allocation of milk quotas. The hon. Member for Antrim, North referred to the hijacking of additional quota for Northern Ireland to the United Kingdom as a whole.

Milk quotas are having a further adverse effect, as many hon. Members have said. They are forcing many would-be mixed farmers and dairy farmers into sheep farming. That has a particularly adverse effect in my constituency, which is a less-favoured area and contains two mountain ranges. Hill sheep farming is most important to many of our people. Unless relief is given, we shall be heading for a new mutton mountain. We shall then have to take corrective action, probably when it is too late.

I do not wish to repeat what has already been said, but I have one or two new points pertaining to Northern Ireland in particular.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman refers to the problem of ossification due to milk quotas and to the looming problem of a mutton mountain. I agree that milk production has ossified as a result of quotas, but may I now take it that the SDLP is against quotas and will be against quotas for mutton as well?

Mr. McGrady: I am arguing for flexibility and fluidity to enhance dairy farmers' ability to continue to earn an income so that they will not be forced to consider sheep rearing, with the possible creation of a future mutton mountain.

A problem has recently arisen regarding the plight of potato producers in Northern Ireland. My recent information is that they are suffering financial hardship. I do not know to what extent the Ministry can intervene. The producers are not being paid for their produce. Exporters are not being paid by their foreign importers. That will have a most serious effect on that important sector of farming in Northern Ireland.

Let me deal with the less-favoured areas. There are applications before the Ministry to extend them. It seems to me that the Ministry is sitting on them; there appears to have been no movement in the decision-making process over the past few months.

The hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) made some interesting remarks about the panacea of diversification in farming to supplement farm income from other sources. I completely agree with him that the possibility of diversification will be negated by the planning regulations that will apply in Northern Ireland. My constituency is almost exclusively an area of outstanding natural beauty. Parts of it are areas of special scientific interest, and parts of it are areas of special control with green zones, blue zones and yellow zones. Within that colour scheme, it is virtually impossible to build a house to accommodate one's family, let alone diversify into other forms of industry and income-producing activity.

I recommend hon. Members who are interested in rural development and the protection of rural communities to read in detail the Maher report, an EEC report designed to help rural communities in Northern Ireland. It is a most interesting document whose recommendations about planning and revitalisation would go a long way towards assisting the continuation of our rural communities, which are the backbone of most nations, and certainly of our nation.

I wish briefly to make two points which are nevertheless important to the people who are suffering the disadvantages to which I shall refer. Perhaps the problem of rural electrification is unique to Northern Ireland, as I do not think that it has been mentioned today. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the most exorbitant prices are being charged for rural electricity extensions by the sole producer—the Northern Ireland Electricity Service, which is a monopoly. The charges being quoted for small extensions to main lines, even for a relatively short distance, are prohibitive to our small farmers. In addition—the House may hardly believe this—if a farmer goes for credit with NIES, which, as I said, is the sole producer of electricity, it charges an annual percentage rate of 34 per cent. That has been admitted in a parliamentary answer. No small farmer can afford that sort of money for the simple modern facility of electrical energy.

My last point is allied to that and concerns bank interest rates. Bank interest in Northern Ireland is automatically 2 per cent. above the minimum lending rate. No reason is given. It is completely to the profit of the banking fraternity. Whatever the rate in the United Kingdom, it is 2 per cent. extra in Northern Ireland from the start. One negotiates from there upwards. Several years ago, farmers were being encouraged to bring wheelbarrows to the high street banks to get the surplus money lying on the counters. They took out massive loans. Since then, they have been crippled by enormous overheads in the form of bank interest.

Will the Minister consider what justification there is for this additional interest factor in Northern Ireland, which affects not only the farming community but the manufacturing and service industries and personal loans.

I commend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for his interest in abolishing the obvious subsidy created by MCAs. I look forward to that alleviating some of the disadvantages suffered by farmers in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

7.50 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): One of the disadvantages of sitting through a debate and being called to speak at the centre point, if not beyond it, is that many of the more important points have been made.

Many farmers will be watching with interest the results of this debate, and the negotiations in the next few weeks. They will be gratified by the Minister's speech. He showed clearly that he will go to Brussels to defend the interests of the British farmers. That will not be a moment too soon for the British farmer. One of my sorrows during the few months I have been a Member of the House is that many hon. Members have been critical of British farmers and

[Mr. James Paice]

agriculture. Even today there have been accusations from the Opposition Benches about the levels of subsidy in agriculture. The blame has been laid entirely at the door of the farmer: we are told that it is his fault.

It is worth reminding ourselves, however, that farmers have responded to the pressures of successive Governments. It is only 13 years since the previous Labour Government produced the White Paper "Food from Our Own Resources" which was widely welcomed. It gave the green light to farmers to produce continuously. That is exactly what has happened. But 13 years is but a blink of an eyelid in the time scale involved in agriculture production.

Farmers have had the security of some market price support, which has enabled them to continue producing and to live up to the expectations of the House. Every country in the western world has various forms of support for agriculture. It is not unique to us. Farmers have sat back and rested in the sure knowledge that the Government and the state will support them all the way. They have invested in and been very welcoming to new techniques, machinery and technology.

We have heard it suggested that many people want to turn back the clock and ban the use of chemicals, and even fertilisers, and that it would solve the problem. It is ludicrous to suggest that as a universal panacea. It would be like telling the National Coal Board that it should produce coal only from its poorest and oldest pits. That would also mean turning one's back on modern techniques of production. It is a good idea in environmentally sensitive areas to have a system such as the Government have brought in during the past few years. I welcome that, but abhor the suggestion that it should be applied across the country without further thought. It would reduce production but increase production costs per tonne, litre or kilo. Then consumers, or the House, would have to find more money in support of agriculture.

We heard much about the consumer from the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). The interests of farmers are in fact very much akin to those of consumers. They are two sides of the same equation, because if the consumer is not buying, the farmer is not producing and surviving. They are both vital. In the 14 years that the CAP has applied to this country, food prices have increased by less than the retail price index year after year. The consumer in Britain as well as in Europe, has been protected from the massive price fluctuations that occur among commodities that are not subject to a marketing regime.

The public perceive that our stores are bulging. I understand why it is highly emotive to have surplus food when we see on our television screens people starving in other parts of the world. It is a vital issue, but we have to examine the reality. On 1 January this year there were just over 1·25 million tonnes of cereals in store in the United Kingdom, or half the figure of a year before and a fifth of what it was two years before. That is a measure of the way in which our intervention stocks have been reduced, contrary to claims that are often made in the House.

Just to put it into context, the 1·25 million tonnes of intervention stocks on 1 January represented only half the reduction in the previous year's harvest, which was 3 million tonnes down. That was more than twice what we had in store only four months after that harvest. Those figures put in context some of the more absurd ideas that have been put forward.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Paice: I shall not give way, as many hon. Members wish to speak. The hon. Gentleman will have a far greater chance to speak from the Opposition side.

The Minister said that 50 per cent. of CAP money is spent on storage and disposal of surpluses, and on export refunds; that position is ludicrous. It has occurred because the Community's politicians—I absolve most politicians in this country from the charge—have failed to grasp the nettle time and again. Because of that inaction, farmers are being asked to pay the price. The massive amount of money spent on storage and export refunds is all considered to be agricultural support. Farmers are personae non grata. They wonder where they are going. They are vilified by the press, by Opposition Members and, I am sorry to say, by a few Conservative Members. That is unacceptable, and it worries me.

I cut my teeth on agricultural politics. I joined the Conservative party and came into the House because I know that my party and my Government support agriculture, as they have done for many years. It worries me that farmers are beginning to doubt the Government's commitment to their future. I know that that is not true, and I want to make it absolutely clear as far as I can. I am sure that the Minister of State will do the same in winding up. The Government and the party are committed to a strong and vibrant agriculture that faces the future, as well as recognising the faults of the past.

We have to create more opportunities for farmers to diversify. There is no single panacea or prop, or livestock commodity, that every farmer can say is the new golden world. It is only 10 to 12 years since oilseed rape appeared on the horizon of East Anglia and then spread throughout the British isles. Now it is planted as far away as Orkney and Shetland. That crop was a great boon. The bubble has burst and there is no similar crop that farmers can plant.

There must be a range of alternatives for farmers, but we have to accept that, as has been said by hon. Members on both sides, for topographical or geographical reasons, not all farmers can take them. Not all farmers are able to go into tourism, horses or other activities. That must be recognised.

I have no brief to protect farmers from bad investments. There have been many of those in the past few years. I do not hold a brief for the inefficient, who must recognise that the time has come for change. But I believe that the country and the House have a responsibility to recognise that farmers need time to adapt to change and to face the future. We have asked them to do a great deal ever since the war, and they have done it beyond all our wildest dreams. Our response to what they have given us must be to give them the chance to change and to be treated fairly. I welcome the commitment by my right hon. Friend the Minister on the green pound. It is important that we have a devaluation to enable farmers to compete just that little bit more fairly.

I recognise the dilemma faced by Ministers. It is strange to be trying to contain the costs of the CAP while maintaining farmers' incomes and viability. We must do something. Although stabilisers are a good means of

putting a cap on the Community's expenditure, I am worried about the effects on individual farmers. In a few years we may wish that we had adopted a more flexible approach.

The Farm Land and Rural Development Bill, which we shall discuss later, is a valuable step forward. It brings in measures that are long overdue. It is many years since I urged my Member of Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), now the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to introduce a scheme to encourage farmers to move into woodland production. This is happening now and, although it is long overdue, it is welcome.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): It is too small.

Mr. Paice: I shall come to that point.

Two or three Opposition Members have compared the amount of money spent on supporting agriculture with the amount spent on supporting British Steel, British Coal, British Shipbuilders and other industries. But there is an even more significant statistic—the amount of money that we are providing to enable those who are finding farming impossible or difficult to continue to diversify or to move into other businesses or interests. The Farm Land and Rural Development Bill will provide £1 million a year for grants towards diversification projects, in addition to the £3 million for related capital grants. Sums of £10 million or £12 million a year have been allocated as replacement for income forgone for woodlands.

That can be compared with the amount spent on British Steel to help steelworkers when there was no further work in steel—£419 million over the past 10 years in readaptation benefits. I do not include redundancy payments. I am talking about special payments to enable those workers to find other businesses and jobs. As for British Coal, more than £2 billion was provided to redundant mineworkers to help them find alternative employment and businesses. That puts into perspective the £4 million a year which we are giving to farmers for diversification and the £10 million or £12 million a year which we are putting into woodlands.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) that the woodlands scheme is too small. I hope that it is the beginning of something much greater. Over the next few years, we shall press Ministers to double, treble and quadruple the assistance.

Hon. Members are rightly concerned about the rural environment, conservation, public access and leisure. The points have been made many times. Great steps have been taken and the Government's measures will assist. We must understand that these measures can be taken only with profitable agriculture. One cannot achieve effective conservation by pauperising agriculture—contrary to the beliefs of some. The countryside is changing. Agriculture is changing, and it knows that it must. Farmers recognise the challenge facing them. We owe them the opportunity to change. I support the Government's efforts to reduce the costs of the CAP. I know that Ministers will work hard over the green pound and other issues, in the interests of farmers.

The House has a major responsibility to tell farmers clearly that it knows that they must adapt and face the future. That is their reponsibility, but Parliament must recognise that it owes them the chance to change. We shall give them that opportunity.

8.5 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I should like to follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) in two particulars. First, I have abstained from agriculture debates for a few months since the corruption of the Opposition Front Bench gave way to the incorruption of the Back Benches—*[Interruption.]* I was sure that the Minister of State would look up that ecclesiastical reference. Little has changed in agriculture debates in those few months. We come every year to talk about the crisis facing farmers. The crisis has been continuing for nearly a decade and the main problems have changed little or not at all.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East said that we blamed the farmers. For my part, that is not true. I have never blamed the farmers for our present position with the CAP. We are producing too much of the wrong quality for consumption. There is a mismatch between what is produced and what is consumed. That is partly the structural fault of the CAP, and partly the fault of Ministers. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be unduly defensive or prickly when I say that the House must decide the balance between consumption and production for the future and how we shall best achieve it.

Secondly, I hope that hon. Members will not look upon the green pound devaluation as a panacea. They appear to do so, but it will be at best—this is the Government's argument and not necessarily mine—only a temporary alleviation of the problems. I say "temporary" for a reason. These matters are not decided by economics. One of the weaknesses of the NFU's brief is the belief that if we move everyone else will stand still and that, either passively or actively, they will accept that we should devalue, whereas others should not accept a devaluation. The truth is that every country will look for a matching devaluation of the green pound once we start. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East talked of a devaluation of the green pound to enable us to compete, but there will be little or no competitive edge. We must return to the point: how, in the long term, do we match agricultural production with the CAP system?

I agree with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There is something structurally wrong with a system that pays so much subsidy, yet so little trickles through to the producer. Whatever else it is doing, it is not doing the job for which it was intended, so we must change the system fundamentally.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and a number of hon. Members ask why we cannot feed the Third world out of our surpluses. There are two answers. First, the surpluses provided depend upon other measures being taken. For example, skimmed milk products are of no use unless there is a pure water supply in the country to which they are sent, and that depends on other forms of overseas aid.

The second answer is that if we systematically exported our surplus products to the Third World to feed them we would destroy their economies, their agriculture and their societies. Let there be no mistake about this. I think that there is general agreement in the House that we should seek a balance between consumption and production within the EEC, with only reasonable economic exports being added.

I now turn to the present situation. I rely heavily on documents 4079/88 and 4588/88 in dealing with the

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surplus of cereals. The cereal surplus was 18·1 million tonnes in 1986-87. That has dropped to 14·2 million tonnes because of the very bad harvest last year, but it is interesting to note that it is 0·4 million tonnes higher than it was two years ago, so let us not be sanguine about the way in which all the mountains are disappearing. They are not disappearing. Consumption still does not match production. If a stabiliser is set at 160 million tonnes, that will still provide a continuing surplus in Europe over and above what we can consume, so the mountains will not disappear.

The documents say that, despite all the efforts, there is still a beef surplus which amounted to 700,000 tonnes in September. We all recognise the problem of red meat and livestock production. Sugar production is acknowledged to be in chaos. We have over-produced for many years. Who knows what the benefit is? There are A quotas, B quotas and C quotas. In our C quota we are effectively undermining the economies of the cane sugar producing countries and causing poverty in many other countries. I do not think that we should be proud of that record.

The production of fresh fruit and vegetables has increased in the past year, despite the fact that buying off the market—that is, buying in and not putting the produce on the market—in many continental countries has become a valuable and significant source of income for farmers. In other words, the products are already too numerous and too great in volume for the market, yet we still consider them to be worth subsidising.

We have to consider where to go from here, because there is a time limit. Document 5448/88 says that in time all those things will be brought into equilibrium, but when will that be? How long, oh Lord, how long? Set-aside can provide only a partial answer. In my view it cannot provide an answer on other than environmental grounds, because the Minister acknowledged in his evidence to the Select Committee that marginal land will be put into set-aside first. He said that we are so efficient that we will not be able to produce more. We are told that crop yields in cereals will rise by 25 per cent. in 10 years. If that is so, from the remaining land we can produce much more than we are producing at the moment in cereals.

Everyone is trying to avoid talking about quotas. The Minister of State knows my view. I believe that quotas should be introduced to govern all products. I believe that that should be done by the EEC for an overall total, but the decision on how each country works up to its national total should repatriated to the individual countries. We must take steps to bring in those quotas. That is the only way in which we can help the small farmers. What we mean by a small farm is not what Europe means by a small farm. In European terms, a British small farmer is a large farmer. We will be unable to help small farmers unless we have a measure of repatriation in the common agricultural policy.

Sheep farming is vital in my part of the country. For such monocultures it is a matter of life and death, not only for individual farmers, but for communities. The NFU is fighting very hard on sheep quotas, despite the fact that union members are asking for them.

When speaking to a farm conference, Mr. John Davies, the Under-Secretary at the Welsh Office responsible for agriculture, was reported in the *Western Mail* on 28 April as saying:

"I for one will fight tooth and nail against the imposition of sheep quotas."

Does the Minister really consider that that is the proper way for a civil servant, who is traditionally politically neutral, to address the problem? Ministers should come out from behind their civil servants and say that to the farmers, instead of using civil servants to express politically contentious views.

Ultimately, wriggle as Ministers may, the only answer will be quotas which combine strategic decisions being taken by the EEC with national repatriation of the means of working up to the quota. Only in that way can we begin to safeguard the small farmer, the monoculturalist and the future of the agriculture system. Even if we continue with a budget of £19 million in subsidy by the EEC, this will be greater than the present budget and will be a continual source of reproach. In all future debates, as if the matter were fresh and new, hon. Members will be saying that we face an era of crisis. We have faced it for a decade. For heaven's sake, in our negotiations this year, let us seize the means of overcoming it once and for all.

8.16 pm

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): I was interested in what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said about quotas. As a result of the introduction of stabilisers, we have what amounts to a Communitywide quota. It will be interesting to see to what extent that Communitywide quota or, to use the old term, standard quantity over a period of time, has to be broken down into quotas for individual farms.

I was very encouraged by the appreciation and understanding shown by my right hon. Friend the Minister of the situation facing agriculture. Nonetheless, it is a continuing irony that agriculture, the industry which, more than any other, has done what was asked of it—increasing production, productivity and the self-sufficiency of national food requirements and helping the Government in their endeavours. The industry is now facing the greatest difficulty. Not surprisingly, as a result, many farmers feel somewhat soured and let down, let alone worried, financially squeezed and desperately anxious about the future of their businesses and the future of the countryside.

The underlying cause of that disarray remains the slow growth in the size of the market in comparison with the huge growth in output stemming from scientific advances put into practice.

I think that the hon. Member for Pontypridd is right. We now have to bring consumption and supply into better balance. However, that is small consolation to the individual farmer who learns from the White Paper that United Kingdom farming income in 1987 was the second lowest in real terms since the war, and that over the past five years the average decline has been 9 per cent. a year. Whereas industry generally is achieving an annual return of about 8 per cent. on working capital, farming achieves the negative return of minus 0·5 per cent. and investment is at its lowest level since the 1950s. Nor is it a consolation that all that is a consequence of successful farming. None the less, that is the situation with which my right hon. Friend the Minister must grapple.

In practice, my right hon. Friend must grapple with the contradictory objectives of preventing further growth in surpluses and in the cost of the common agricultural policy, and the commitment in the treaty of Rome to increase the earnings of those engaged in agriculture.

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend carries a great responsibility, as has been emphasised several times already, for the economic and social interests of rural areas and for the conservation of the countryside, the latter being an admirable, but added, self-imposed burden stemming from the Agriculture Act 1986. I do not envy the Minister, but he and his ministerial colleagues are extremely well qualified to cope with the gargantuan task that they face.

We all know that in 1992 the Common Market becomes a reality. From that time on there should be fair and equal competition between all food producers in the Community. That does not mean, as was said earlier, that British farmers will automatically enjoy a bonanza. It must not be forgotten that many European farmers, probably a majority, are already efficient and are daily becoming more so. On the other hand, British farmers will at least not be at a disadvantage, as at present they are in many respects. Not only are they squeezed financially in the short term, but farmers outside Britain enjoying a slightly better level of prices may be able to improve their competitiveness now, which would be to our disadvantage from 1992.

The National Farmers Union has calculated that the loss of farm income in the United Kingdom brought about by stabilisers for all commodities in a full marketing year will amount to about £125 million. I accept that the Government do not wish to have a green pound devaluation to offset the effect of stabilisers, as the objective of stabilisers is to contain output and the cost of the common agricultural policy. But I also agree with the hon. Member for Pontypridd that a devaluation on the green pound is not a panacea.

On the other hand, when United Kingdom agriculture prices are between 6 and 8 per cent. lower than those in France and Ireland, and up to 17 per cent. lower than those in the Netherlands and West Germany, it must follow that there is a strong case for the devaluation of the green pound, because such price levels are bound to militate against the competitiveness of United Kingdom producers. Therefore, I was pleased to hear what my right hon. Friend had to say on that topic.

There is heavy discrimination against cereal farmers in Britain. Although some livestock market prices are satisfactory at present, livestock farmers are being asked to compete on unfair terms. The position of pig farmers continues to be very serious indeed.

The vice-chairman of a pig farmers' co-operative in my constituency has just sent me some illustrative figures. I believe that they were produced by a Cambridge agriculture economist and refer to eastern counties pig producers, but I am assured that the situation in Wiltshire is similar.

In the four weeks up to 23 February this year, pig producers in the study were making a loss of £13·20 per £100 of output, or about £6·50 per pig. In the subsequent four weeks a loss of £11 per £100 of output, or about £5·50 per pig, was registered.

My correspondent described his position as an example. He turns out 5,000 finished pigs a year. Therefore, even if the loss was £5 per pig, less than either of the figures that I have quoted, he would show a year-end deficit of £25,000. Clearly, such a situation cannot continue for long without disaster, and action is called for.

I have no doubt that pig farmers are efficient enough to make a living if competition is fair, but for that to be so my right hon. Friend the Minister must achieve a devaluation of the green pound and wipe out MCAs whatever opposition he faces from his European counterparts.

While pig producers' returns have not exactly been helped by extra sheepmeat coming onto the market and while I am pleased to see more sheep in a traditional sheep area such as Wiltshire, I share the concern of my right hon. Friend the Minister and others about possible adverse consequences in the upland areas where sheep are often the only source of income.

I revert for a moment to cereals and other crops on which there is major economic pressure. For example, rape has been an excellent corn break and cash crop for the past decade or more, but now its economics is decidedly marginal. Therefore, there is bound to be a tendency for farmers growing rape to return to more grain production.

Already the United Kingdom is the sixth largest exporter of grain in the world. Even as little as 10 years ago nobody would have thought that that was conceivably possible. It is an extraordinary reflection on British agriculture's ability to increase output. It is amazing. But equally clearly, against a background in Europe and the United States of what almost amounts to a glut in cereal production, there is little scope for still more exports. In any case, as we know, stabilisers will insist on a limit on production, and with storage and disposal of all surpluses costing about £250 million a week, the stabilisers must be right.

But I am not sure whether the production limit insisted on by the stabilisers is fully understood. We know that the stabiliser for cereals has been set at 160 million tonnes. We know that the EC can normally dispose of about 155 million tonnes. We know that the estimated output for Europe in 1992 is about 184 million tonnes. No doubt stabiliser price cuts would cut off some of that production, or at least reduce it in some areas. No doubt set-aside, too, will encourage a reduction in cereal acreages, but the size of the area to be set aside, or de-intensified, or extensified, is literally enormous.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Does my hon. Friend agree that to set aside the equivalent of 5 per cent. of our productive area we need to set aside the equivalent of the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire put together?

Sir Charles Morrison: I am sure that my hon. Friend's calculation is more or less correct. I was about to make the same point in a different way.

On the basis of an annual growth in grain production of about 2·6 per cent. on average—I say on average because obviously there will be an occasional bad harvest, as there was last year—in the United Kingdom alone, it has been estimated that the area of land surplus to the requirements of cereal production is likely to increase annually at about 100,000 hectares—247,000 acres. That means about 1 million acres in four years. It is a staggering acreage that must come out of grain production in one way or another.

It is no use pretending that there is a simple panacea for this problem. My right hon. Friend will have to make use

[Sir Charles Morrison]

of a full range of policies to cope with the new position of agriculture and the rural areas. I am glad that that is exactly what he is doing. However, I hope that he will give more consideration to the financial encouragement of the growing of spring cereals and the undersowing of grain. Those two systems together could have a considerable effect on reducing the total grain production and would be enormously beneficial to environmental conservation.

While my right hon. Friend considers those matters, will he also redouble his efforts to convince his colleagues on the Council of Ministers that the co-responsibility levy achieves nothing but great administrative cost? Does the Minister know what that administrative cost happens to be? That levy is also a considerable cost to feed manufacturers, and improves the relative economics of imported manioc to the detriment of further use of United Kingdom or European Community-produced grain.

I encourage the Minister to take more of his measured steps more quickly, and perhaps even a few unmeasured ones, if they can speed the process of readjustment of British agriculture. British farmers and all those employed in the ancillary industries depend on the success of that process. Collectively, they account for the health of the rural economy. That is the burden for which my right hon. Friend is responsible. It is a heavy burden, but for the good of all our rural areas, it is one in which my right hon. Friend must achieve success.

8.32 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): We heard earlier that a number of Conservative Members wish to speak in the debate. I have the impression that it would be helpful if speeches were kept as brief as possible to let as many hon. Members as possible speak. That is a courtesy that is not normally extended to Scottish Opposition Members during Scottish Question Time or Scottish debates, when often our time is eaten up by Conservative Members. I shall try to be as brief as possible, because I would not wish to follow that pattern.

The thread running through the debate is not just the vast amounts of money being expended on agricultural subsidies in general. There is also a worry, expressed especially by Opposition Members, that the small farmer is not getting a fair and adequate deal.

I remember a comment made by the former Minister with responsibility for the Highlands and Islands, who was then the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute, Mr. John MacKay. He referred to crofters as state pensioners. He said that they should not be receiving handouts from the state and behaving like pensioners. The electorate has now pensioned off that Member of Parliament. That sort of attitude from the Government is not appreciated by smaller farmers or crofters.

For crofters to be referred to as state pensioners is to imply that they receive an excessive amount of Government subsidy. That was not only a graceless remark by the previous Minister, but it was wrong. It has been mentioned already that only about 30 to 40 per cent. of EEC agricultural subsidies go to farmers. Only 10 per cent. go to the smaller and poorer farmers—those on less than average incomes. That is despite the fact that, according to *The Economist*, the smaller farmer is more efficient in his output per acre, output per head of stock, unit labour cost and pound invested.

However, as the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) said, the overall effect of Government subsidies is to support not smaller and proper farmers, but always the larger farmers. That is the sort of discrepancy that I draw to hon. Members' attention. It is wrong not only on the grounds of equity, but on the grounds of efficiency. It is wrong not just in the narrow economic sense, but in the larger sense of using Government and Community money properly to sustain, support and promote rural communities.

I confine my remarks to crofters as a sub-group of the smaller and poorer farmers. The image of crofting sometimes conveyed—possibly the image that Mr. MacKay was thinking of when he referred to them as state pensioners—is that it is an outmoded, inefficient and inadequate system of agriculture or a traditional form of farming that has lost its place in the modern world. That is not true. Modern-day crofting is more relevant than it has ever been.

Crofting is a model of the sort of farming that Conservative Members say that they want to see. Crofting exemplifies the virtues of diversification of farming activities. Crofters commonly combine their farming activities with other economic supplements—for example, weaving, working in light industry, tourism or even professional work. That not only increases their individual income but stabilises the rural population.

Although people can lose their jobs and go through temporary periods of crisis, if they have a crofting background on which to fall back, they can retain their roots in the community until they find further employment. That helps to avoid the demoralisation that could easily lead to rural depopulation.

Crofting is also relevant to today's needs. It will probably amaze many hon. Members to learn that the most densely populated area of countryside in Britain is in the northern end of my constituency. Although it is very marginal land, because crofting can combine with other forms of income, people are encouraged to stay on the land, which maintains a flourishing rural community.

Sir Hector Monro: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Macdonald: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue. He may be able to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I turn now to some of the problems that crofters face. Enough has been said about the threat that grazing fallow poses to them. If sheep production is moved from the upland areas down to the lowlands that will be a body blow to the crofting communities, because sheep production is the staple of crofting. I hope that the Government will seriously take account of that.

This problem is reminiscent of the problems of the milk quotas and unequal effects on farmers, particularly in Scotland, where farmers have not produced to excess but have been hit by the broad-brush approach because of the way in which the quota scheme operates. I hope that the same will not happen with stabilisers for sheep production.

A couple of points that have not yet been discussed arise from the Minister's opening remarks. He got feisty and condemned the Opposition for having nothing to say for the farming community. He tried to give the impression

that the Government's record with farmers was blameless, but the tax on research and development is affecting smaller farmers who cannot afford to pay the new fees they are being asked to pay for services from the Ministry, which they formerly received free.

What will be the effect of the poll tax on crofting communities? The Minister made great play of the fact that farmers, too, would benefit from the income tax changes of the Budget. However, he scrupulously avoided referring to the poll tax's impact on rural communities. It will be devastating, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, for two reasons. As a flat-rate tax it will discriminate against low-rated rural areas in the Highlands and Islands. The university of Strathclyde has estimated that between 65 and 75 per cent. of people there will end up as losers under the poll tax.

The present rating system makes allowance for the fact that marginal, peripheral and outlying areas receive fewer council services—less rubbish collection and street cleaning, fewer street lamps, and less access to libraries and facilities such as swimming pools. By taking account of those factors, the rating system balances out the inequity. The poll tax will not take account of them and will be a great disincentive to people to live out in the rural areas, because they will have to pay the same for fewer services.

The poll tax will also disadvantage crofters because they will lose the 50 per cent. rating concession that they now have and which was introduced by a Conservative Government in the 1950s. It is an unfortunate sign of the times and of the change in the Conservative party that it should take that concession away. It is hypocritical of the Government to go on about the supposed threat of the rating of agricultural businesses and to do away with the 50 per cent. rating concession simultaneously. If there is an argument for the one it also applies to the other.

The rating concession for crofters was introduced specifically to take account of the disadvantages they suffer, living and working in the areas that they do. The costs of living are higher there; electrification is an example which has been mentioned. Crofters in my constituency can pay £2,000 to £3,000 to be connected to electricity. That is why it is sad that the Government are thinking of taking the concession away. It has been estimated that the introduction of the poll tax will remove £1·5 million from the crofting areas.

The Government cannot pretend to be blameless on fish farming, either. It is not an industry in surplus. It is an example of crofters diversifying and it makes great use of new technological developments. It has exciting prospects and is particularly useful in the disadvantaged areas on which we need to target our money. The Government happily sit by while fish farmers are burdened with a tax with which no other enterprise or business in the country is saddled. It was imposed by the Crown Estate Commission and the fish farmers receive next to nothing in return for it. They would at least receive services in return for their rates. Until the Government wake up to that and do something positive about it, they can hardly pretend to be blameless.

The thrust of Opposition Members' remarks has turned the Government's attention to the position of smaller and poorer farmers in disadvantaged areas. The agricultural crisis consists not only of the difficulties in keeping subsidies for the farming sector under control. The underlying crisis is the increasing trend towards fewer and bigger farms. That is an unhealthy trend for rural communities and the Government should try to do something about it.

8.47 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I agree strongly with what has been said about the beef variable premium. It always seemed a perfect system to me. It helps the farmer and encourages the housewife to buy the beef by keeping the price down instead of selling it into intervention. To get rid of it seems an act of madness.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for the tough stand he takes on most issues for British farmers—if not yet on the one I have mentioned. He manages to hold out against all the other farm Ministers in the European Community, he preserves our interests, and he prevents discrimination against us. That is his primary job. We shall never reach a stage at which everything in the garden is satisfactory, so I draw his attention to some matters that particularly concern my constituents.

First, we demand a measured devaluation of the green pound so that we are paid the same for our produce as other European farmers. However, it is important that should not lead to the French obtaining an even better devaluation, which would cause CAP spending to hit the budget ceiling and so jeopardise other policies. There is no justice in our farmers getting less than the others on the continent for identical produce.

My sheep farmers are worried about the future course of stabilisers. We did not want and do not like a separate stabiliser system for sheepmeat and we know the Minister fought hard to avoid that. But we can all—albeit a trifle reluctantly—accept the logic that as we have a separate sheepmeat regime to which we are deeply attached we cannot grumble too much if we have a separate sheepmeat stabiliser relating to 1987 flock numbers, as long as it does not lead to too big a reduction in the support price.

We are, of course, anxious to get on with the wider review of the sheepmeat regime so that we know where we stand in the longer term. Until the French presidential elections are over, I fear that this, along with many other things, will have to wait. The French insist that we do not discuss the long-term review until negotiations with the 12 outside countries, and especially with New Zealand, are completed. Those discussions have not yet begun.

I make absolutely no apology for saying that we should take a very tough line with New Zealand on sheepmeat and on butter now that she no longer fully supports NATO. It is most important that in any set-aside policy, land set aside should not be used for grazing sheep because that would put many of my sheep farmers out of business. I am grateful to the Minister for getting this matter on the optional list in Europe, and I trust that he will not permit it to take place here. I hope that I did not detect a slight wobble when he was speaking about this and trust that it was merely a courteous nod to his own part of the world.

The matter of most concern to dairy farmers is the quota system. They have now settled down and adjusted to it as it is. Although we know that quotas should exist up to 1992, there is no guarantee that they will exist up to then or that even before 1992 there will not be changes in the rules and regulations about transfer and leasing after 1989, never mind 1992. It terrifies me to see how much some farmers are paid for quota. That is an absolutely artificial market that can be changed by Government regulation,

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

reducing an expensive quota to a worthless piece of paper virtually overnight. It is vital to clarify these points as soon as possible or bankruptcy could result.

I thank the Minister for his efforts on our behalf and wish him well in his negotiations in Brussels.

8.51 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): In many ways the debate is a rerun of debates that have taken place in the last decade or more. Anyone who reads the Commission's document, "The Situation on the Agricultural Markets", or its proposals for agricultural prices in 1988-89, which sketch what has been happening in agricultural markets, cannot help having a great sense of feeling that he has read it all before throughout the 1980s.

The Commission admits that the money being spent on the common agricultural policy is doing very little for farmers. Referring to the agricultural markets, the document says:

"it has become increasingly evident that the income support function the CAP provides to farmers is often poor value for money."

The document on the proposals for agricultural prices for 1988-89 says that, despite the changes so far undertaken,

"the underlying trends in consumption and of production are not yet significantly different from those recorded in the more distant past."

In other words, even the tinkering that has so far been carried out on the common agricultural policy has not produced a significant change in the way in which money is spent on that policy.

It is difficult to realise in the context of a debate on CAP spending that this year's budget for the CAP shows the largest increase for a long time—perhaps even in the history of the common agricultural policy. It is up by almost 30 per cent. In the previous five years, the average increase was slightly over 16 per cent. and yet the budget is presented to us as a triumph for the new realism. The new realism for the cereal quota is 160 million tonnes, but Community consumption over the past few years has been less than 140 million tonnes. Unless there is some way of exporting about 20 million tonnes at no cost to the taxpayer, we are building into the system a significant subsidy at a time when we are supposed to be trying to get rid of subsidies.

A great deal has been said about the GATT round of talks in Uruguay. Even if they are successful, they will take at least four years to carry through. The differences that exist between the negotiating positions of the European Community, the United States and the so-called Cairns group headed by the Australians are so great that it is difficult to see how a compromise can be achieved within four years.

The common agricultural policy has outlived its usefulness. It was formulated at a time when traditional farming methods were the norm, when the dairy industry grazed cows on ordinary untreated grass in the summer and gave them a bit of hay in the winter. Now we are factory farming and the common agricultural policy cannot cope with that. We must stop tinkering with the complexity of the existing systems and come down to seeking a few fairly simple but radical solutions.

The first thing we must say is that the existing system must be phased out over, perhaps, five years. In its place we need a battery of measures, such as the introduction of quotas across the board allied to a reduction of inputs. That can be achieved partly by reducing prices and thereby discouraging farmers from the excessive use of fertilisers, cattle feed and pesticides, most of which are doing irreparable damage to parts of the countryside.

The Minister was rather complacent in speaking about some of the people who oppose new methods and changes as Luddites. Much of the opposition is simply to do with making sure that we do not pollute the earth and poison ourselves. We need to extend the principle of environmentally sensitive areas. Perhaps we should push a similar scheme on the 7 million acres of land mentioned by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). That land has been brought into production since the last war and has brought about much unnecessary production.

We should get rid of the green currencies, phase them out. However, we must accept that in doing that we will come up against one of the major problems of the common agricultural policy, which is that conditions between member states are very different. I shall give one example of that in relation to energy prices. In 1987, energy prices declined in real terms by more than 20 per cent. in the Netherlands, by 12 per cent. in Italy but by only 4 per cent. in France. I could give other examples to show that the input costs for farmers vary tremendously across the Community. We need to forget about the existing common agricultural policy and get a completely new one based on the factors that I have mentioned.

8.58 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I begin by paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what he has achieved in Europe on behalf of agriculture in this country. Many farmers in my constituency admire his robustness and they will be delighted to hear that he has forced a tough stabiliser on wine production. Too often the farmers of this country think that farmers in other countries get away with blue murder while we put up with the curtailment of output.

The situation in the countryside is genuinely worrying, not only for farmers, but for the ancillary trades and for the rural economy in general. There is no doubt that the dairy industry is experiencing a certain stability over the introduction of quotas and I cannot help but smile when I recall the resistance to those quotas when they were introduced. The future for cereal farmers and livestock producers is most uncertain.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to the transferability of quotas between farmers. That will be widely welcomed and we should appreciate what my right hon. Friend has achieved. Nevertheless, the farmers are still a little discontent about the £90 dairy inspection charge. A commitment was given some time ago that that would be re-examined, and it would be interesting to hear tonight whether any progress has been made on that.

Like myself, the dairy farmers in my constituency are against the co-responsibility levy and it would be marvellous if that could be abolished. It is a ludicrous tax and is now down to low levels, particularly in the dairy business.

Furthermore, there is a levy to be paid by milk producers this year on over-production. My right hon. Friend will probably remember a commitment given by his

predecessor that farmers in this country would not have to pay that levy unless it was paid by producers in every other country in the Community. I should be grateful if he would reiterate that commitment.

Overall, dairymen crave fairness and fair competition. They are prepared to take on anyone, but they want fairness. As we face up to the next stage of curtailing agricultural output, farmers accept the need for financial discipline. Quotas have undoubtedly made farmers look carefully and afresh at their businesses to maximise profits rather than simply maximise output. A price squeeze has the same effect, but the farmers retreat into trying to produce more rather than trying to produce it more cheaply, thereby defeating the object.

Farmers are looking at the whole of their businesses, rather than concentrating on producing more and obtaining a greater output. Whether they are involved in milk, cereals or meat, they are concentrating on selling the product rather than just producing it. Food from Britain has undoubtedly been a help in that, but much still remains to be done and we must look to the farmers and producers to do much of that themselves. If they wish to diversify and go into a leisure business—caravans, fishing or shooting—they expend a great deal of time researching the market before they do so.

The message that I wish to give to my right hon. Friend is that agriculture as a whole is looking for fairness of competition. We shall achieve parity in a genuine common market in 1992. I am delighted that we are to begin to take steps towards achieving parity of the green pound and sweeping away some of the livestock MCAs that need to be removed.

Many hon. Members were impressed by yesterday's lobby by pig farmers from the NFU headquarters. They crave equal opportunity. In 1984, 83 per cent. of the food consumed in this country was home-produced. In 1987, that figure had fallen to only 73 per cent. Much of that must be attributed to the fact that our farmers are facing unequal competition while others are able to send cheap food to this country. There is no accounting for those who want to eat Danish butter or drink French water, but we are losing out in our market to cheap imports.

I was pleased to receive a brochure entitled "Pork Talk", published by the NFU, as it shows the unfairness of competition in the pig in the pig industry abroad. In France, there is a system called "Stabiporc". That is not a new way of putting the wretched animal to death, but a stabilisation scheme initiated by the Credit Agricole and backed by the French Government. Last year, this scheme paid out £12·5 million via marketing groups, either as a subsidy or as cheap loans at a 5 per cent. rate of interest. In Italy, grants totalling more than £30 million have been paid to producers on a per pig basis as an emergency measure. In Germany, small farmers are able to reclaim VAT of 13 per cent. on output, while paying only 7 per cent. VAT on inputs.

As I said at Question Time today, the imports of manioc carry a levy of 28 per cent. for pelleted or processed product and 6 per cent. for raw product. It appears that, although the imported product is processed, the lower levy of only 6 per cent. is being paid. This is in clear breach of the rules. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will have time to reflect on these obvious breaches of the regulations and will be able to give us his thoughts about "Pork Talk"'s revelations.

What of cereals and stabilisers in general? As I have said, when prices are forced down, farmers produce more. Secondly, the plant pathologists have guaranteed that they can increase output by 1·5 per cent. per annum, so that forcing down the price will not do much good. Thirdly, stabilisers penalise the non-expanders. Fourthly, bearing in mind that mainstream farming will always occupy most of the land in the United Kingdom, it would be marvellous if we could look again at the quotas for producing cereals. Quotas have been successful in milk, potatoes, sugar and hops.

As has been said already today, morale in agriculture is bad—it goes from poor to terrible. We can see where we are going, but I urge my right hon. Friend to keep talking and to keep pushing as he has been doing in Europe. He must go steadily, and be gentle with the farmers. He must keep on telling them where he is taking them because he is getting a lot of credit for doing that.

9.6 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is unfortunate that the Minister cannot tell the farmers where he is taking them. I do not criticise the right hon. Gentleman personally, because he does not decide policy any more, and neither does the House. The Minister was not even present—if I am mistaken he will correct me—when the Prime Minister, along with others, decided what the stabiliser figures and arrangements would be. That is the extent to which uncertainty about agriculture has been increased.

The House is not even debating a motion on the important documents before us, which bring about a complete change in agricultural policy and the prices for the coming year. We are paying those prices in the way of taxes.

I deplore the fact that the Government have decided, though a procedural device, not to allow the House to debate an amendable motion. There is now no view of the House on this change of agricultural policy or on the prices that are being paid. That procedural and constitutional slippage should not go without strong remarks. We should point that out to Conservative Members. They have different views from mine about the main merits of the market, and they voted away those powers, so they have no real claim to talk, because we are now but a consultative assembly, if not less than that.

Enough of procedural matters—let us talk about agriculture. Can and do stabilisers work? If the liabilities exceed the income, capped by the so-called discipline tied to the gross national product of the Community, what will happen? Those who know doubt very much whether stabilisers will do the trick. The Select Committee on European Legislation has reported on these matters, in documents HC 43-xix and HC 43-xxx. We note that, although 1 million hectares have been designated for the set-aside proposals, the Government reckon that even if it is reduced on the basis of cereals, it will save only £260 million.

It looks to me as though we shall be in shtuck in a few years' time, if not sooner, with those so-called measures. The bizarre results about which we have heard, if my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) was right, shows that there has not been much field work. His

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figures comparing likely income from the schemes for a farmer in Cumberland compared with one in East Anglia were bizarre indeed.

With the quotas introduced this year, together with those introduced two years ago, we have reached a turning point in British agriculture of equal significance to that resulting from the Williams Act and our entry into the Common Market itself. The Minister must agree that the tragedy of it all is that, despite the money being spent, and unlike those two other eras of the War Agriculture Executive Committee and the Williams Act, we are not encouraging good husbandry.

The combination of interest rates, bank loans, the need for inputs and the need for productivity screws farmers into practices and financial difficulties that they could well do without. Indeed, as has been publicised in the newspapers, the Minister may have difficulty in deciding who is to pay for better practices. There are reports questioning who is to pay, for instance, for nitrates—with which we shall have to deal in respect of our water supplies in any case.

I draw the attention of the House to evidence that can be found in the Library, and which has been received by the Select Committee on European Legislation, from the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. In referring to direct income aids, the council states:

"CPRE considers that if a rich and varied landscape, wildlife and historical heritage is to be maintained, price reduction must be accompanied by the introduction of direct income aids tied to environmentally beneficial uses of land. This is not recognised in the Commission proposals."

The Minister suggested that there would be some environmental benefit from the additional expenditure, I doubt it. Mention was made of environmentally sensitive areas, and it was stated that 100,000 hectares will be put into the sort of regime that I will describe in inverted commas as "the Halvergate scheme". That is surely no answer at all. Paying farmers additional money not to grow things which they might otherwise grow, under a regime that is already expensive, is throwing additional sums of money after and additional sum of money. That illustrates the back-to-front nature of the whole scheme.

Article 39 of the treaty of Rome is worth studying because it encourages production, scientific innovation and greater output per farm worker. Those may have been valuable at the time when the treaty was drafted—my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), adverted to them in his speech—but they have now become the opposite. Instead of encouraging certainty for farmers, who have the weather to deal with anyway, they encourage uncertainty, and that is what agriculture can well do without.

9.13 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): When the quotas were introduced in April 1984—may I have the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister?—the then Minister of Agriculture explained to the House that he had agreed to southern Ireland having an increased milk quota while ours was slashed, on condition that the United Kingdom was allowed to keep the variable premium. Therefore, if the variable premium is taken from us, I charge my right hon. Friend to ensure that the southern Irish quota increase, which was agreed only on the basis of the variable premium remaining, is taken away to what it would have been had it been on the same historical basis as that for the United Kingdom. We cannot have this penny spent over and over again—it was a quid pro quo and so it must remain.

In the brief time available to me I exhort my right hon. Friend the Minister, who is such a redoubtable fighter for the United Kingdom's industry in negotiations, to ensure that the policy is coherent. It is not coherent to put a standard quantity—now called a stabiliser, although it is exactly the same as a standard quantity—on lamb production, and then to allow the grazing of fallow land so that others can go into sheepmeat production who are not there at present.

Nor, of course, does it make sense to put a standard quantity on British sheepmeat production and not drastically curtail imports of New Zealand lamb. Otherwise the percentage of the market occupied by New Zealand will continue to rise rather than fall, just as the percentage of our packaged butter market going to New Zealand has increased rather than diminished. By 1989, New Zealand butter imports ought to be down to 40,000 tonnes. New Zealand will then have only the same percentage of the market as it did in 1983. That is essential. New Zealand has sacrificed our sympathy in following a policy of withdrawing from its defence obligations; we therefore have no further obligation to crucify our own agriculture to admit New Zealand's produce.

Quotas have been mentioned, but when a quota is applied it should, if possible, be before and not after there is a surplus. Otherwise many producers will have the unanswerable problem of spreading an overhead commitment based on one level of output over a smaller level. It follows as night follows day that the standard-quantity policy will fail for the same reason as it failed under Christopher Soames. It does not bite on the individual producer; it still pays him to produce more and to beggar his neighbour instead of himself.

We shall have to proceed to a quota policy, because it is the only way to resolve the dilemma to which my right hon. Friend himself drew attention. With vastly increasing expenditure on the so-called agricultural programme in the Community, we nevertheless have catastrophically falling farm incomes. The only way to square the circle is to have quotas which provide budgetary limitation, with the payment going to the food producer rather than to the food storer.

I have said this before, and I shall continue to say it. The truth will not go away with failure to grasp the nettle, and that is why quotas are bound to come. They are, moreover, the only way to secure the pattern of livelihood in rural areas, instead of causing rural depopulation with all the social costs that go with it. The realities will not change.

I have a last question for my right hon. Friend. Much reference has been made to 1992, when EEC competition policies are to achieve final harmonisation. The date for other policies is 31 December 1992, but many people assume that the end of the green pound and the MCAs will be on 1 January 1992. Will that be the case, or will it happen a year later, on 31 December? It is crucially important that we get rid of such distortions—which will otherwise drive so many of our producers out of business—before that date arrives. That is why we should do as much as possible this year rather than leave it until 1 January or 31 December 1992. We must get rid of those

distortions with which our industry is at such a disadvantage as compared with other producers in Europe.

9.20 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am very conscious of the fact that a number of hon. Gentlemen who have been present in the Chamber throughout the debate have not been fortunate enough to be called. That is a matter of regret, because the debate has been interesting and very well informed. I express my personal regret that those hon. Members on the Government Benches have not had an opportunity to make their contributions. I know, however, that the Minister of State is anxious to reply fully to the debate. That is right and proper because, as the Minister said in opening the debate, this is essentially a consultative debate. I am sure that the House wants to hear some response from the Minister of State on the matters that have been raised.

I am the sixth hon. Member from the Principality to speak this evening. There have been contributions from two of my hon. Friends representing Scottish constituencies, and from two hon. Members from Northern Ireland. I am aware that the responsibility for agriculture is not held exclusively by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, because the territorial Ministers have responsibilities as well. None of them has been present during the debate. I do not say that as any kind of criticism, because they have other responsibilities, and the debate is being led by the Minister. Because serious concerns that have been expressed by those hon. Members representing Wales, Scotland and Ireland, I hope that the Minister of State will give an undertaking that he will draw to the attention of the territorial Ministers the concerns that have been expressed this evening. That is not a point of contention. It is a request to the Minister and I should be grateful if he would respond to it.

The majority of the contributions have had three things in common. First, and most obviously, most of them have been critical of the Government. That is true not only of the contributions from the Opposition Benches, but of most of those from behind the Government Front Bench. Secondly, most of the contributions have concentrated on constituency matters. That, too, is right and proper, because there has been an intensive system of lobbying during the last couple of days, and farming interests are very important to the economy and the fabric of our rural life. It is therefore important that those interests are properly represented in debates in the House.

Thirdly, most of the contributions have come from hon. Members who represent essentially the dairying or livestock areas of this country. Those are the areas that are in greatest jeopardy because of the potential movement out of cereals as a result of the stabiliser proposals. The great fear in the dairying and livestock areas is that as the stabiliser package starts to bite and put pressure on cereal producers to go into livestock rearing, this will undermine those areas that have been referred to by several of my hon. Friends as monoculture areas, where the combination of geographical and economic circumstances means that there is little opportunity for diversification. I believe that those are very significant developments.

When the Minister opened the debate he referred to the paradox of the common agricultural policy. He said that as financial support for the CAP has grown, so the income of farmers has fallen. Tonight's debate is essentially about how that internal contradiction can be resolved.

There has been much criticism of the CAP, particularly from my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), whose contribution I welcomed, because for several years he spoke for the Labour party on agricultural matters. I am sure that all of us recognise the value of his contributions, and I was particularly pleased to hear him in the debate this evening.

It is worth reminding the House that since 1975 the CAP has been responsible for increasing agricultural production by 23 per cent. That has been at the cost of a 125 per cent. increase in expenditure by the guarantee fund. At the same time as that increase in production, farm net income has seen a 25 per cent. reduction. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said, the average cost to the average family in the Community is now running at over £10 per week.

Throughout that time, in the words of the former Minister responsible for the environment, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the CAP has been operating as the engine of destruction of our environment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd pointed out, we have been responsible for dumping surpluses on the Third world and wrecking their economies. That is not a record of which the CAP can be proud.

Both sides of the House have expressed the concern and alarm for the future that is felt in all sectors of the industry. Everybody is concerned, apart from the Minister of Agriculture. He seemed to suggest that everything is OK. He said, "I will make adjustments to the green pound if I can get agreement. I will get the stabilisers to operate if I can get agreement." He made many suggestions about his policy, but he signally failed to give us any guarantee about his negotiating position. I was reminded of the speech that he made in February, when he said:

> "As was constantly said to me when I was going round the country, what farmers want most of all is an end to the uncertainty . . . We have achieved most of our objectives, and one of the factors that had to be considered was the importance of ending uncertainty."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 756-57.]

The Minister set that as a standard by which we should judge him, and by that standard he has failed in his performance this evening. When we have asked for an end to the uncertainty and for guarantees about the position, we have had precious little from him. Our cereal farmers do not know what is to be expected of them. They have no guidelines. They do not know how to adjust their production if they are to avoid the imposition of stabilisers.

The future of the beef support scheme is in jeopardy. We know that the variable premium will end on 1 January, and we are told that there will be something to replace it, but we do not know what that will be. Our sheep producers face the prospect of an end to the variable premium. The sheep rearing areas do not know what will replace that. We do not know the Government's real intention on the green pound. We had a vague statement from the Minister this evening. He said that he was generally in favour of a devaluation, but he failed to take the same steps as his colleagues in the Council of Ministers, who have set devaluation of the green pound as a condition to their

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sitting down to negotiate. Our Minister has said that we would like to see a devaluation of the green pound, but has not set it as a condition.

That is supposed to be a package that brings an end to uncertainty. I am afraid that we have had as much certainty in those matters as we have on the Government's real intention on extensification and set-aside. We have not had an end to any of the uncertainty.

We know that the Government have announced that by midsummer the proposals will be implemented. If anybody could think of a date for the implementation of the proposals that would be least suited to agricultural interests in this country, it would be midsummer. The cereal harvest will be growing and harvest time will be approaching. How are farmers supposed to adjust then? How, halfway through the season, are our stock farmers supposed to adjust their annual programmes? How are they to cope? How are they to avoid the impact of stabilisers? By midsummer none of the uncertainties will have been resolved.

We know that the Minister has succeeded in one thing. He has succeeded in making most people opposed to his proposals. I do not mean just those in the House, but most people outside as well. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) referred to the representations from the National Farmers Union. He mentioned the good briefing that the NFU had circulated to Members of Parliament.

The NFU said:

"Over the last two years some 20,000 full-time jobs for farmers and farm workers have disappeared and investment has fallen by 30 per cent. to the lowest level since the mid 1950s. Farmers' return on working capital was negative."

The NFU also said:

"The Government's White Paper also showed that UK farming income in 1987 was the second lowest in real terms since the war—over the last five years, the average decline has been 9 per cent. a year."

That is not a particularly praiseworthy record. The NFU goes on to say, however, that the package will serve to tighten the screw even further. That is the view of the NFU.

The Farmers Union of Wales was even less charitable. On 3 May it responded—*[Interruption.]* The Minister of State may want to challenge some of these points and I look forward to hearing him challenge the statement by the National Farmers Union, interpreting the Government's statistics. The president of the Farmers Union of Wales said:

"The Ministry of Agriculture's recent report on farm incomes in the UK shows that the real value of farm land and building has fallen by 40 per cent. since 1979. Based on Inland Revenue data, 48 per cent. of all farmers were assessed to have a total income of less than £6,000 in 1985 and 31,000 had an income of less than £2,000 a year . . . These statistics bear out the fears we have been expressing in recent months. Unless farmers generally can improve their incomes, the effect of this continuous erosion of earnings will have far-reaching consequences on the industry."

The package will have far-reaching consequences in precisely the areas that can least afford to bear the brunt—Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the upland parts of England. That is the unfairness and folly of the Government's proposals. They have not sought to ensure that the cuts fall where they can be borne most easily. Not through malfeasance on the Government's part, but through indolence, or perhaps lack of concern about the upland areas, their policies will fall most heavily on those areas.

I see that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has come back into the Chamber. It is true that she joins us frequently during our agriculture debates. She comes in, goes out and comes back in. I am sure that, like all other hon. Members, she will have had representations yesterday from the farmers. The farmers who lobbied me and my colleagues from Wales were particularly concerned about the erosion of the farming base. They argued as follows: "We have had lean times, certainly since 1979, and they have eroded our earning capacity. As a result of that erosion, capital investment in the industry has fallen. It has now fallen to its lowest level. It is now a third of what it was a few years ago. As a result of the Government's packages and the lack of investment that we have had in recent years, the industry is being critically weakened."

The farmers are looking forward a few years—it is a pity that the Government are not—to 1992. In 1992, the Single European Act will be in operation, whatever the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) may think or hope. What will happen then? If our agriculture has been faced with five years of erosion, if farm incomes and farm investment have suffered from five lean years, it will not be in a position to respond to the challenge available to it. I fear, and the farmers of Wales who came to visit me yesterday fear, that instead of an exciting challenge and the opening up of new opportunities, they will face a nightmare. They obviously do not welcome that prospect.

Those views from the industry have been expressed in the debate this evening, and they are shared by the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities. As most hon. Members know, the Committee has been examining these proposals. The Minister of State will be pleased to know that it is not the national executive committee of the Labour party, but a Committee of the House of Lords. The report says in paragraph 50:

"It is the Committee's view that Agricultural Stabilisers should not be regarded as the major instrument for controlling production levels. Primarily, Agricultural Stabilisers are instruments for budgetary control . . . Effects for production of most CAP commodities are likely to be limited and to be lost within the overall variability in agricultural production from year to year."

It goes on to say:

"For sheepmeat, the Committee cannot accept the discrimination against the United Kingdom incorporated in the Commission's original proposals. Following the perverse logic of setting a separate stabiliser for sheep numbers in Great Britain, the principal Community sheepmeat producer, the Commission should equally have proposed the setting of separate stabilisers for the principal Member State producer of other commodities (for example, a separate stabiliser for cereals in France)."

The sheep farmers of England and Wales want to know the reason for this treatment. They will lose £3 million in variable premium next year because the Community is in surplus and we have special arrangements for Britain, which is the largest producer. That will have considerable consequences, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) said. Why have sheep farmers been singled out for equal treatment, while the cereal farmers of Germany and France, who are responsible for surpluses in that commodity, are not to be treated similarly? Why does

the European burden not fall on them? It is most unfair. There is little wonder that farmers in the uplands, faced with the prospects of a squeeze, and competition from lowland diversification, view the future with trepidation.

The environmental impact of stabilisers has been mentioned, as has the way in which the Government have been using the Agriculture Act 1986. We all listened to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) with great interest and respect. I am sure that some of us read his books in the same spirit. The hon. Gentleman mentioned environmentally sensitive areas. The Opposition have gone on record as saying that we endorse the Government's proposals and welcome ESAs. They have been successful. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South, does not agree with us, but, that is our view. We debated this in Committee and told the Government of our support, but it is not unqualified and unlimited support. The reservations that we are starting to have about the impact of these measures are shared by many people outside the House.

Let me quote from evidence given by the Council for the Protection of Rural England, with eight other organisations, to the House of Commons Select Committee on European Legislation:

"the Commission's proposals pay scant regard to the environment, maintaining many damaging aspects of the guaranteed section, despite firm evidence of the acceleration of loss of landscaped features."

The CPRE was joined in that by eight other groups, including the Ramblers Association, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales and the World Wildlife Fund, in an unprecedented coalition to put pressure on the Government to recognise the folly of their ways. They are particularly anxious to ensure that when the new set-aside proposals eventually come into effect, they will achieve a diminution in agricultural production in a way that minimises environmental damage and uses the opportunities that created for environmental enhancement. It is a great pity that we have had little evidence from the Government that they intend to do that.

We are not confident that the set-aside proposals will achieve the objective of reducing production. This week the European Commission has made provision for a 50 per cent. leakage of saved production. If the Commission wants 1 million hectares of land removed over a five-year period it will have to make provision for double that, because of the inherent inconsistencies of the set-aside proposals. It is budgeting for a 50 per cent. failure of the proposals.

The proposals present a threat to the upland farmer. They will not achieve their objective and will be environmentally damaging. In the last debate, in February, we offered constructive support to the Government. They have failed in the endeavour that they set out to achieve in Europe. Their proposals are inadequate and we shall urge them to reconsider their position.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): It must have been surprising for many hon. Members who have sat through the debate to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and compare it with the speech of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). The hon. Member for Caerphilly attacked the Government for not listening to the lobby of the National Farmers Union, yet his hon. Friend told the NFU that the real problem with the Government was that we were not tough enough on the price stabilisers, that we had not banged the farmer strongly enough and that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not have enough bottle. That is what the hon. Member for South Shields said, although it is not something that would be recognised by any other European country. If the hon. Gentleman had been around Europe and listened to what the rest of Europe thinks about how successful the Prime Minister had been and how unsuccessful their own Prime Ministers had been, he would have heard a different story.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly had the cheek to say that we had been too hard on the NFU and went on to say that the NFU wanted a devaluation of the green pound. The hon. Member for South Shields said that he did not want any devaluation of the green pound. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways, even though he has been divided from his hon. Friend by every other hon. Member who spoke. No doubt the hon. Member for South Shields will start telling his hon. Friend that it is a good idea to have the same policy at the beginning of the debate as at the end. The only problem is that that would mean that we would have to assume that there was a policy at the beginning of the debate. That is difficult to understand.

I felt sorry for the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) because at least when he led the Opposition we knew where we were. We may not have agreed with him, but he put forward a policy that had to be answered. He had a view. He said that we should have quotas on everything. That was nonsense, but it was a perfectly legitimate view. The hon. Member for South Shields has given us no view at all. On the one hand, he has said that the farmers were poorly off and, on the other, his policy would make them more poorly off.

I must apologise to the hon. Member for South Shields. In a recent debate, I accused him—I think, in retrospect, unfairly—of being committed to a policy of £50 a tonne, for wheat. If I was unfair, the hon. Gentleman must stop using the figures which are based on £50 a tonne; otherwise he is trying to have it both ways. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he will cease using figures that suggest that farmers in Britain could produce wheat at £50 a tonne.

The hon. Member for South Shields went on to accuse my right hon. Friend the Minister of a sell-out on the sheepmeat regime.

My right hon. Friend has made it absolutely clear that the United Kingdom needs a regime which satisfactorily meets the needs of our sheep industry, but at the same time we are not starting discussions by saying that we are not willing to discuss. That is no way to get out of our problem. The Opposition admit that a series of different regimes within Europe create certain problems. If we could find a solution which was satisfactory to everyone, it would be worth discussing. However, as history has shown, we have stood up toughly for the British farmer, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) made clear.

The hon. Member for South Shields cannot have it both ways. Either he should accept that it is his policy to clobber the farmer, or he should propose something which will give the farmer even more in the way of subsidy. He cannot expect to have the farmer's vote while he is making one

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half of his speech and the consumers and the taxpayers vote for the other half. He really must be consistent, and until he is he will not be taken seriously by the farming community or indeed by the electorate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) is taken seriously. I have not quite finished his book, "Red or Green for Farmers", in which he made some important points which we should not avoid. His major concern is that farmers should be seen, at least in part, as conservers of the countryside. I think he used the word "husbandman" in his book. We might be accused of sexism if we use that word, but we may find a word which would cover what he wishes us to do.

I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that the Government have shown themselves increasingly concerned to say that part of the reason why the agriculture community is supported in a way that is different from other industries is that they look after 80 per cent. of the land area of the country. If it were not looked after by farmers, it would turn into a wilderness that would not be loved by ramblers, bird watchers, townies or anybody else. Therefore, the farmers need support to enable them to avoid that.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) always delights us with the charm with which he puts the whole of his own personal experience, and indeed his personal financial circumstances, at the mercy of the House so that we can understand how matters proceed. I agree very much with his concern that we should not so cut production in the rich part of the world that we are unable to meet the needs of the poor. However, all the advice of the independent groups such as Oxfam is that, except in emergencies, there is little place for food aid, because continuing food aid undermines the ability of countries to produce.

Not long ago I went to Mauretania, which is one of the poorest nations. The effect of continuous food aid on that country and the destruction of nomadic agriculture as a result is one of the most serious things I have ever seen. We must not be too facile in our discussion of the matter—that description does not apply to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North—and suggest that one can pick up a lot of the surplus food produced in the west and deliver it on a permanent basis to developing countries.

I take very seriously the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) about the problems with the pig cycle. I worry lest pig producers should believe that, even if in the course of our negotiations we reach our desired aim which is the elimination of MCAs on pigmeat, as has been stated very clearly by my right hon. Friend and myself, that will not remove the fundamental problems of the pig industry, which is a much wider international issue. It is necessary to eliminate MCAs as it is unfair that the situation should remain as it is, but it ought not to be seen as the only answer. The NFU briefing gives the impression—I am sure it is not meant—that the removal of MCAs will have a bigger effect on the livelihood of farmers than I believe will be the case.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: No. I want to apply myself to answering the questions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East also mentioned the planning authorities' attitude. We are anxious that all planning authorities should realise that the changes in the countryside demand a more sympathetic understanding of the re-use of old farm buildings, of new enterprises and so on. The countryside must be a work-place, not a museum. It is crucial that planning authorities should realise that.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) made a curious comment. He said that, as usual, the United Kingdom comes off worst. Time and again the rest of Europe believes that we have won battles, even though we have started with a major disadvantage. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that he constantly carries on with an untruthful statement about the effect of British negotiations and discussions.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) spoke of the contribution of lower food prices to the fight against inflation. We should congratulate the farming industry on the way in which over the past 10 years it has made a major contribution to the reduction of inflation. It is noticable that it has been able so to do within the environment created by this Government whereas it was not able so to do within the anti-agriculture and anti-food production environment created by the previous Labour Government.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) talked about the suckler cow premium. It was this Government who raised the level in Europe much higher than it had been before and paid at the top of the permitted level. I know that he will understand that the suckler cow premium is always one of the most difficult parts of my negotiation because other EC countries do not attach the same importance to it as we do. However, I shall certainly take on board what he has said.

Mr. Gill *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I must try to answer the points that have been raised. I shall talk to my hon. Friend after the debate, if he will allow me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) talked about planning, and that is a matter that we have very much in mind. I have now addressed five meetings of planning officers and those concerned with planning committees and I am now discussing means whereby we may make farmers more aware of their responsibilities. This is a two-way matter. It is not just a matter for the planning committee; the farmer must be prepared to proceed in the right way in order to have the best chance of obtaining planning permission.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) talked about whether the rest of the United Kingdom had stolen his milk. I know of his feelings, but I must tell him with great care that much of the English part of the United Kingdom feels rather the opposite. There is always that difficulty. The hon. Gentleman may disagree with them, but I merely say that as a matter of fact, whether they are right or wrong. However, the hon. Gentleman made an important contribution enabling us to understand even further the particular problems in the north of Ireland.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) made some points that I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern

Ireland. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) asked me to draw to the attention of the various territorial Ministers the points made in the debate, and I shall certainly do so.

My hon. Friend and constituent, the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) spoke about diversification opportunities. He said that so far we have done the right things, but not enough of them. I would expect him to press me to do more, but it is most important that what we do we get right. We must not have a modern equivalent of the groundnuts scheme. We must not go forth with some gigantic scheme for, for example, the afforestation of Britain which turns out to be founded upon false premises. We cannot have an ESA system which turns out to be an invitation for fraud or scandal. We must move step by step towards a position in which alternatives are available for farmers throughout Britain.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd reminded us clearly of his view on quotas. However, I disagree with him and with my right hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) on that. Quotas have a disastrous effect upon an industry. They give to those who can the power to continue. There is no opportunity for others to come in. They solidify and restrict an industry. There is little opportunity for enterprise. There is no advantage in dong something well. They have all the worst aspects of Luddism and I continue to be wholly opposed to them. If we have a system with a mixture of price restraint and alternative provision, and we can keep the farming community closer to the market, I believe that we shall have an answer that will work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) spoke about the green pound, and in so doing he did a most important service to this debate. He reminded us of the underlying increase in yields and production. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North passed over the fundamental underlying facts about the increase in production in favour of temporary positions in the beef and cereal markets. My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes put the record straight.

The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) spoke about the problems of crofting. I shall consider with my right hon. Friend the points that he made. He knows that I have tried to see what can be done for crofters. I was sorry to hear his comment about my former hon. Friend, Mr. John Mackay. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman quoted him properly. That was a pity given the tremendous amount of work that John Mackay did on behalf of those people least well off in the farming industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster congratulated my right hon. Friend, and I thank her for that. She made some points about New Zealand that were echoed elsewhere. We must be careful about blaming the New Zealand people for the state of their not always attractive Government. We shall take into account what my right hon. Friend said.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) suggested that our policy was to get rid of subsidies. That is not our policy. We accept that agriculture will continue to need support. Our policy is to ensure that that support goes to the farmer and is not wasted on the system. We want to make savings for the taxpayer and make sure that our money is efficiently and effectively spent. If the hon. Gentleman wants to get rid of subsidy entirely, he must tell the farming community that that is the policy of the Labour party. That is what its policy appears to be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) mentioned the £90 dairy charge. It is difficult to accept the objection to people paying £90—usually once every two and a half years—to ensure that the product that they sell to the public is of the proper quality. Everyone else has to do that, and I do not see why it is so terrible to ask the farmer to do it, too. If we can reduce the price, we certainly will. I hope to make an announcement on that matter once the discussions have been completed.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) made some procedural points. Those were agreed through the usual channels and cannot be aimed at the Government or at my right hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) knows that I do not share his views on quotas. The sort of quotas that he wants would not be a sensible solution to the problem. However, I agree with him about coherency of policy. It is important that all parts of the policy fit together. He will agree with me in rejecting the attacks of the hon. Member for Caerphilly. In the part of his speech which was on the same side as the hon. Member for South Shields the hon. Gentleman repeated the argument that the Government should now tell the House what decisions will be made after the negotiations for the price fixing. We could do that if we knew. We do not know, because we have not had the negotiations.

The Opposition have not been involved in negotiations for so long that they do not understand how they work. They cannot ask us to tell the House our detailed position when we are trying to win in negotiations. If they go into negotiations by telling their opponents exactly what they will settle for, they will lose the negotiations.

That point was made by the hon. Gentleman who was presuming to tell my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister how she should negotiate. A fat lot of good she would have got out of the negotiations if she had gone in like him. She would have said, "This is what I will settle for; I might go down the road as far as that. I have agreed to do this in advance." What a nonsensical way of dealing with anything. Thank God our negotiations are not carried out by the hon. Member for South Shields and his cohorts: our opposite numbers in Europe would not know who was speaking on bahalf of the Government and they would be beaten in any discussion of any subject in any part of the farming industry.

This debate has been another example of the fact that the Labour party has no agriculture policy. In so far as it discusses agriculture, it hits the farmers, attacks what they are doing and does everything possible to undermine——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Farm Land and Rural Development Bill

[Lords]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

10.1 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House will be well aware from the previous debate of the action we are taking at Community level to tackle the challenge of the surpluses and, domestically, to deal with alternative land use. I did not refer to the farm woodlands scheme earlier, because there is an opportunity to do so now, although I made a brief passing reference to the farm diversification scheme.

The two schemes that we shall introduce after the passage of the Bill are part of a coherent policy that we have been developing for the alternative use of land that is no longer needed for food production. Both the farm woodlands provisions—clause 2—and those on farm diversification—clause 1—will help to contribute to the process of adjustment that will be required. They will also assist the rural economy and help to maintain an attractive and living countryside.

I am delighted to see that there has been considerable interest in the Bill and widespread support for the principles that it contains. About 80 amendments or new clauses were tabled in Committee, mainly relating to clauses 1 and 2. Most were designed to probe the Government's intentions about the details of the schemes that we propose to introduce by secondary legislation. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my noble Friend in another place for the admirable way in which they guided the Bill through its Committee stages.

In view of the hour, I shall comment now on only one or two points of general interest. While the Bill was under consideration in Committee, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in the Budget that the tax arrangements for forestry were to be changed. That brings to an end arrangements that were widely seen as unjustified, unacceptable and damaging in the long term to the forestry industry. In parallel with the tax changes, the Forestry Commission closed its existing planting grant schemes, and we have introduced a new one, called the woodland grant scheme. It was not possible, for obvious reasons, to announce the Budget changes in advance or to consult on them. However, the House will have an opportunity to debate the financial side of the changes during the passage of the Finance (No. 2) Bill. My right hon. Friend explained in Committee the implications for the farm woodlands scheme.

In brief, the Forestry Commission's new woodland grant scheme offers higher rates of planting grant than previous schemes, both for broadleaves and conifers. However, for farm woodlands, we have decided to increase the grants only for broadleaf trees. We hope that that change will ensure an adequate proportion of broadleaf planting under the scheme, especially as the new higher rates will apply to pure broadleaf planting and the broadleaved component of mixed woodland. We felt that that was a better way of encouraging more broadleaf planting than the introduction of compulsory minimum proportions of broadleaves, as favoured by some. That would have been administratively cumbersome and too inflexible, given that the appropriate mix of species will vary from area to area.

The Committee also took the opportunity during discussion of clause 1 to discuss the closely related capital grants for diversification, which we introduced on 1 January this year, and the way in which the scheme relates to the planning process. We made it clear in those discussions that we shall not be paying any capital grant on work that has not secured any necessary planning consent. So the new scheme is not in any way designed to circumvent the normal planning process.

In the case of the new grants for feasibility studies and for marketing costs which the Bill introduces, the need for planning permission will not, of course, normally arise, so the arrangements will be different. We are, however, conscious of the need to help farmers to become aware of when they need planning permission and of the need to encourage them to discuss relevant proposals with the local planning authority at an early stage. That can often be helpful in securing planning consent.

Replying to the previous debate, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State spoke about the relationship between farmers and planning authorities now that we are encouraging more actively farming diversification to alternative businesses. I am well aware of the concern among farmers about the attitudes of planning authorities. As my right hon. Friend said, it is equally important that farmers should become knowledgeable about how to approach planning authorities about their developments, and we are currently thinking about how we can assist on that.

The Bill has been widely welcomed and forms part of our coherent strategy for farm diversification and the rural areas. It is desirable for the Bill to be passed as quickly as possible so that we can move to the next stages and introduce the schemes that are involved.

10.5 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) cannot speak in the debate because he chaired the Standing Committee—with distinction, I understand. I was not a member of the Committee but I have taken a close interest in it. The Bill must be seen in the overal context of the Minister's policy. It is clearly part of the common agricultural policy as it applies to Britain.

The Minister earlier spoke about price restraint, stabilisers and set-aside. I shall not go into detail about that. He spoke about taking land out of production and into woodland. I gather that overall, 12,000 hectares of woodland per annum is the planting target. One hopes that there will be a proper balance—indeed, the Bill makes some effort to achieve it—between broadleaf trees and conifers. We are also dealing with diversification and rural development.

One of the critiques that one can make of Government policy as seen in the Bill is, can it be measured against declining farm income? We have heard that farm income dropped in real terms by 9 per cent. per annum throughout most of the 1980s. We also heard that 37 per cent. of farmers have incomes of less than £5,000 per annum. I should like to look at that against the Minister's policy on prices, and the reduction in output that will result from the

imposition of the policy of putting more land into woodlands and against the Government's other policy, which is not in the Bill but is connected with set-aside. When one looks at those policies one cannot be over-optimistic about the effect on farm incomes.

If, by one way or another, land is taken out of production, output will go down and the profit from farming will be reduced. Another part of the Minister's policy is that farm prices will be held. That will also lead to a reduction in profits if, at the same time, the input prices that farmers have to pay continue to rise. The overall equation does not make economic sense, especially on family farms.

The Minister said that environmental grants in 1983 were 4 per cent. of total grants and that in 1987 they were 40 per cent. of the total. He failed to say that between 1983 and 1987 total grants dropped from £216 million to £95·7 million. It is easy to make up statistics in an honest endeavour to prove the case, but 4 per cent. of £216 million compared with 40 per cent. of £95·7 million represents a reduction in support of £121 million over a four-year period. That needs to be put in perspective.

From my research of the Committee proceedings, I see that there is an allocation of £1 million for diversification and a forecast for the farm woodland scheme of £10 million, plus capital grants of £3 million. That adds up to £14 million and must be set against the loss of £121 million over the past four years. There is a problem because there is less land in production and there are lower prices and rising costs. It is not surprising that farmers find that their margins are reducing substantially.

I welcome the proposals for diversification and the increase in woodlands, but I counsel the Minister that this long-term policy requires time. I refer him to an article in today's *Western Mail* which states:

"Robin and Jo Ransome have a 30-acre holding, Grieg Cottage Farm, near Grosmont, in Gwent, where they run a flock of 100 milking ewes."

Clearly, those people have gone into diversification. The article continues:

"The milk produced by the flock is processed on the farm to make 'Skirrid' cheese. Whilst at agricultural college, Jo did a business management exercise on setting up a milking sheep unit. She interpreted the available data pessimistically but still came up with a viable proposition."

It is a viable proposition, but I know from personal experience that it has taken five years to get it off the ground. I was the lecturer who supervised that project at the Welsh agricultural college. I plead with the Minister to note that diversification takes time, and investment should be made over a period so that farmers can develop their business.

New clause 1 has excellent objectives——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No amendments were selected.

Mr. Livsey: I understand that, in Committee, a discussion took place about low-input farming.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): How does the hon. Gentleman know that?

Mr. Livsey: I know that because I read a chunk of the Committee proceedings.

There is a case for low-input farming, but I wish to caution the House about that. It is an attractive ecological policy to farm all the land, rather than taking some of it out of production, but the margins on low-input farming are unknown and uncertain. I ask the Minister to consider the possibility of putting his experimental husbandry farms to work in diversification.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate his remarks to what is in the Bill, rather than what might have been in the Bill.

Mr. Livsey: Diversification could be tested on the test bench of the experimental husbandry farms to find out whether adequate net incomes could be obtained from farmers with diversified farm enterprises. Much work is needed before we can go headlong into great changes of policy. However desirable, they are theories and need to be put into test bench practice before they can be brought to a conclusion.

In rural development, there is no question but that the work of the Development Commission and the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas has been good. I understand that the two bodies are to be amalgamated under the Bill, and that is an interesting development because COSIRA has a good record in assisting small businesses and jobs in the countryside. The Bill must bring about a sustainable agriculture with adequate farm incomes, a countryside that appeals and remains ecologically and environmentally balanced, and a rural population that lives on more than a poverty wage, with a diversity of occupations.

Those objectives are hard to achieve, but they should be aimed at, and the Bill is a start on that route. I encourage the Minister to go much further, because the money that is on the table is not adequate to replace some of the land that has been lost from agricultural production. More money is needed to ensure that these farm businesses survive.

10.15 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I welcome the Bill, but it is in the nature of a minor palliative for the debilitating disease from which British agriculture is suffering. It is rather like treating a case of serious typhus or yellow fever with an aspirin. It may be welcome to the patient, but it does not go far enough.

There must be a general realisation, after our earlier debate, that agriculture is in a serious position. The general public still do not have the faintest notion of the seriousness of the problems. I can give two cases from my constituency to support much of what has been said in the Chamber today. Last weekend, I was speaking to someone who is greatly respected as a conscientious and efficient farmer in the Fens. He has been farming since 1943 and he tells me that this year, for the first time, he will be making a loss. I was also speaking to the senior partner of one of the biggest firms of chartered accountants in south Lincolnshire, most of whose clients are in agriculture, and he told me that not one would be reporting a profit this year. That is in Lincolnshire, an area which until now has been associated with prosperous agriculture.

Of all the grievous burdens that British farmers face, the most grievous and the most easily avoidable is that created by the completely bogus system of currency rates, the so-called green exchange rates. There is no reason, either in equity or in economics, why exactly the same exchange rate should not be applied to agricultural commodities as is applied to all other goods and services.

[Mr. Quentin Davies]

Would it not be regarded by the House as a monstrous national scandal if it were suggested that German cars, washing machines or schnapps should benefit from a 12·5 per cent. export subsidy and British motor cars should suffer a 12 per cent. levy?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please return to the subject of the Bill?

Mr. Davies: I hope that I did not stray too far out of order. The subject that we are discussing forms part of a complex structure with the rest of today's proceedings and the reason is simple. It is that the object of the Bill is to address a fundamental problem, which has already been referred to by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey)—the future of agriculture and the livelihood of the people who work in it. I have been much impressed by the energy and determination with which my two right hon. Friends have defended our agricultural interests in the Council of Ministers.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that we are debating the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill. The House has strict procedures and I was wondering whether the Orders of the Day had been changed.

Mr. Speaker: Certainly not. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) must relate his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Davies: I trust that it will be in order, Mr. Speaker, to say that while I greatly welcome the Bill and the effort which the Government have put into it, I hope that that effort is not by one iota at the expense of the energy and determination that my right hon. Friend the Minister will continue to display in Brussels, in endeavouring to abolish green rates of exchange.

10.20 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I was not a member of the Standing Committee on the Bill, but I understand that the debates which took place there were both informed and constructive.

I come to this debate armed with words of wisdom from a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which is most concerned about one aspect. That society approached me as a member of the Public Accounts Committee to point out that some £6 million will be allocated over the next three years to a particular area of expenditure under the farm woodlands scheme.

My understanding of that scheme is that it is intended to bring about a major change in land use in the United Kingdom by the conversion of 12,000 hectares of land each year for the next three years. Although that is only a modest measure, it represents an increase of more than 50 per cent. in the current rate of woodland planting in the United Kingdom, which is 23,500 hectares a year.

The Bill makes no provision for monitoring the impact of the scheme on the environment or the extent to which it meets the objectives of directing land away from agricultural production and assisting in reducing surpluses. There is no provision either for monitoring the enhancement of the landscape and the creation of new wildlife habitats, or the contribution made to the rural economy and to the nation's timber needs.

How will the Minister know whether the scheme has helped to reduce agricultural surpluses? How will he be able to measure that if he does not check the output from farmers who enter the scheme, or even make a sample check that could be subject to some form of multiplier with a view to making a national assessment? How will the Minister know that a farmer has not turned over to agriculture a spare piece of land which may be of high interest in terms of its wildlife? Such action by irresponsible landowners could negate the objective of the scheme.

Mr. Barry Mayes of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, who so competently briefed me on these matters, wishes to know, on behalf of his organisation, how the Minister can satisfy himself that the objective of achieving one third broadleaves has been met if the scheme is not monitored.

Mr. Steen: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has raised an important point. Like him, I am a keen enthusiast of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. However, is the hon. Gentleman not concerned that if farmers grow trees, which is commendable and would have his support, they may be tempted to destroy the habitat for wildlife and birds that currently exists there, in order to make good the crop output which they lost? That is one of the worries. If I can catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker, I hope to extend that point—but is it not one of the hon. Gentleman's concerns?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, of which I am sure the Minister is aware. We all know that some farmers will try to compensate for that loss of production by utilising land that currently might form a habitat for wildlife, and that is worthy of concern. What I want to know—as does the RSPB—is how those habitats will be protected from the greedy farmer who wants to compensate for loss of income.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman has just referred to the "greedy farmer who wants to compensate for loss of income". Surely anyone whose income falls tries to increase it to its former level to maintain his standard of living and that of his family. Why should farmers be called greedy for trying to do what everyone else tries to do?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening to what I was saying, he would realise that I was referring to the "greedy farmer" in the context of his making use of a specific loophole. If he did not do so, I would not wish to describe him as greedy. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would accept that if a farmer used the scheme to compensate himself for money that he might have lost, that would be a greedy move. No doubt he would not wish to condone it, and nor would the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). I am sure that the Minister will wish to assure the House that he will not condone it either, and will introduce monitoring arrangements to ensure that it does not happen.

Can the Minister satisfy himself and Parliament that taxpayers' money—potentially £2 million a year—is being spent effectively? How can he modify the rate of grant under clause 2(3) if he is unable to measure how effectively grants are being put to use? On behalf of the RSPB, I suggest that, as a compromise, a review is conducted of perhaps 10 per cent. of the participants in each region.

That would keep the administrative burden and the cost to the state to a minimum, while providing an indicative measure of cost-effectiveness and of the extent to which the objectives of the scheme are being met.

I put that proposition as a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I remember many occasions on which the Government have introduced schemes and we have ended up evaluating the effective use of taxpayers' money. We have often found that the money has not been used properly, in that it has not met the objectives of Government. The Minister may wish to intervene to reassure me. I believe that he should consider the possibility of a Public Accounts Committee inquiry. However, if he were to give the assurances that the RSPB and I, along with other hon. Members, are seeking, that inquiry could possibly be avoided.

The Minister of State referred earlier to the groundnuts scheme. We might have a minor "groundnuts scheme" if all this went wrong. The Minister may refer with glee to the famous groundnuts scheme, but he would do well to recall that the losses on Nimrod and on Britain's torpedo programme—losses incurred under the present Government—far outstrip in real terms anything lost by a Labour Administration during that groundnuts affair.

10.27 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): The Bill has been described as a modest little Bill. However modest it may be, I welcome it: indeed, I welcome any initiative that encourages woodlands. I am sure that it is right to encourage broadleaf woodlands particularly, and right also to encourage those who are prepared to plant them and to make an inevitably long-term investment that has little or no prospect of short-term gain. If previous generations had not taken that broader view, where would all the beautiful Shropshire oak that adorns the Chamber have come from?

Farm woodlands make sense on four counts: economic, ecological, practical and environmental. Economically, it must surely make sense to try to replace 90 per cent. of our timber imports with our own production. Quite apart from the benefit that that would confer on our balance of payments, it would create employment. Environmentally, trees are an important part of the countryside and they certainly improve any landscape. Practically, we can grow trees in this country. The climate is not unfavourable and farmers have the ability and knowledge to plant and care for trees. Ecologically, at a time when the world is seeing the destruction of the rain forests, it must make sense to plant trees, on however modest a scale. Timber is the only replaceable fossil fuel.

While congratulating my right hon. Friend the Minister on the Bill, I should like to put the proposed measures in perspective. It would be wrong to believe that this is more than a small step forward. It would be wrong and dangerous for Parliament to suggest to the nation that it is anything more than a small step forward.

In my county of Shropshire, which is a reasonably green and pleasant land, woodland occupies only 7 per cent. of the total land area. That is 7 per cent. after considerable arboreal activity in the years since the war. In fact it represents only a mere 0·5 per cent. increase in the 40 years since the war.

In the context of agricultural surpluses, estimates of the land that we need to take out of production vary according to which expert one consults: some say as little as 5 per cent. and some say as much as 20 per cent. If we accept the smaller of the figures, we are talking about taking out of agriculture the equivalent of what is currently planted with trees in the British countryside.

The purpose of my remarks is not in any way to denigrate the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister. Indeed, all concerned—the farmers, the public and my right hon. and hon. Friends—recognise——

Mr. William Cash (Stratford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gill: I will give way to a neighbour.

Mr. Cash: I am a constituent of my hon. Friend and I thought that it would be appropriate for me to say how much I agree with everything that he has said. I am not only a constituent but a neighbour, and my hon. Friend has touched on a point that is of great interest to his other constituents in Shropshire and to my constituents in Staffordshire. I endorse everything that he has said.

Mr. Gill: That was a generous intervention and it was much appreciated, even though my hon. Friend interrupted me in mid-flow when I was trying to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for his efforts. Hon. Members recognise and respect him as a sincere and concerned man who is doing what he can under extremely difficult circumstances. I should not like my right hon. Friend to interpret my remarks in any way as critical of his efforts. The purpose of my remarks is to put those efforts into perspective. However, the scale of the problem defies any one man's efforts. Indeed, it defies the best endeavours of this nation and all other nations. But, Minister, every little helps.

10.33 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): There is much in the Bill that I welcome and much that will be welcomed in Northern Ireland. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will not be surprised to hear that I begin with the same little quibble, to put it mildly, that we always have. When I turn to page five, line 10 I see that

"Sections 1 to 3 above do not extend to Northern Ireland".

There is a little more above that, which is the usual junk that we see in Bills. It says that there will be

"An Order in Council under paragraph 1(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974".

All the same old nonsense that we see time and again appears in the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) would have been carrying out this task tonight, had it not been for a family death. He raised that point in Committee and said that there is no good reason why the Bill, and so many others, should not be extended to Northern Ireland. Then we would not have to go through all the other nonsense of introducing something similar for Northern Ireland when we are not offered any possibility of real debate and certainly no possibility of amendment. The introduction of something similar for Northern Ireland may be during the next few weeks or perhaps as far away as two years. However, I do not think that it will be as long as that in this case.

It is that point about Northern Ireland which concerns me, my party and those whom I represent. I wish that the Government would get away from it and start treating Northern Ireland as if it really was part of this kingdom,

[Mr. William Ross]

rather than something that some of them appear to wish to push away, off into the blue yonder. Northern Ireland is not going to go away; it will be part of the United Kingdom for a very long time. Since I came to this place 14 years ago, I have existed in that limbo. I liked it little then and I like it less now. The sooner that we are done with that nonsense, the better for all concerned.

When I was here in 1974, the House was full of sound and fury and weeping and wailing about a universal food shortage. We are now bemoaning a massive surplus across the world. When one reads the papers and sees the horrifying pictures of famine in some lands, one sometimes wonders where the surpluses are, although one can understand the difficulties of dealing with localised famine in the world.

How have we gone from one extreme to the other in those 14 years? I recall that in my first speech on agriculture all those years ago I asked what we would do when European production created surpluses. Some hon. Members giggled, but the Government of the day did not giggle as loudly as the rest. They clearly saw it coming.

We are in this difficult situation today because agriculture has existed in highly artificial market conditions for the past 50 years. Those artificial conditions have caused many of the difficulties that we now face. Our problems will remain. I cannot envisage those artificial market conditions—either the former or the present measures of support—disappearing. They will stay with us for many a long day, and we must live with them. We must accept the restrictions that they place on us, but we hope to see the day when agriculture can stand on its own two feet.

The Bill deals not only with woodlands but with grant-aided ancillary farm business activities. Just to lift the Minister's heart, let me tell him of a wonderful story that appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* on Good Friday this year about a new farm industry in Ballymena in Northern Ireland. A farmer there had started a brand new farm industry. He was producing donkey's cheese for sale. Those who care to look up the date of Good Friday will realise that we were being had. I am afraid that that particular bird never flew very far. I see one or two hon. Members having a look at their diaries. For the benefit of those who cannot remember, Good Friday fell on 1 April. I confess that I thought that that was a wonderful story and showed a great deal of initiative on the paper's part. Sadly, the donkey's cheese is still in the making, and will remain in the making for many a day.

Earlier today, the Minister spoke of people with small farms going out of agriculture. He implied that that would reduce production. Shortly afterwards, the Liberal spokesman, who will forgive me if I do not try to pronounce his constituency—I am not sure that he would do all that well with some of our Irish place names—drew attention to the fact that he was a small poor hill farmer from Wales who did not apparently earn much money out of his farm. That is precisely the position in most of Europe, which is full of small part-time farmers like the hon. Gentleman, who has taken on another part-time job in the House.

We shall continue to have in much of continental Europe people who are not really dependent on farming nevertheless farming at a fairly high level of efficiency and producing an enormous amount of food. I do not believe the happy story that the small farmer on the continent will disappear, thereby reducing total food production. People will remain, because they like living that way.

The Minister said that we had to keep up with modern farming methods. I got the impression that, if we did not, farming would quickly be in serious trouble. Over the past 40 or 50 years, we have been engaged in steadily reducing the number of human hands in farming, increasing the number of machines, improving our methods and increasing production as a result. Every time we moved another step down the road of more machines and fewer people, we took another step towards our present surpluses.

There is a limit to how much one pair of hands can do, how many sheep and cattle they can look after. Every stockman in the House knows what I mean. A farmer needs to look at the animals every day and to look after the machinery, crops, hedges, ditches and fences to ensure that everything is in proper shape for farming.

If we continue taking land out of production and pursue farm diversification and ancillary farm businesses, inevitably, regardless of set-aside, there will be a transfer of food production from the marginal worse land to the better land. That will follow as surely as day follows night. The smaller farmer in the hills will suffer. The squeeze will be slow, but steady, and continued.

We face the problem with which the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Argentina and many other countries have had to live throughout their existence —the ability to produce far more food than our people can consume. We are going down the same road that the United States went down, of trying to reduce food production to provide a reasonable standard of living on farms or farming enterprises.

Whenever I come to the House, I drive over Glenshane pass, which is not far from where I live. I always look out across the river Roe and I see a large chunk of the hill which, a few years ago, was heather but which was dug up at great public expense. It is one of the areas in the United Kingdom which was dug up and sown with grass to increase hill production. One wonders now how wise that expenditure was. Although it was useful to the farmer concerned and allowed him to remain in business and to look after his family for a few more years—it is not quite the loophole to which reference has been made—in the long run it will be money lost. Sadly, a good proportion of the farming community will come under increasing financial pressure. Over a long period, it will mean that fewer people will live on the land.

A new clause was tabled but not selected, which was a pity. If we had considered it, we would have started to discuss the nitty-gritty of what the Bill says to the farming community. The Bill is an admission that, for many farmers in a large part of the United Kingdom, farming no longer provides a satisfactory standard of living. There are transitional movements to keep people on the land.

To some extent, the Bill is a bit of social engineering. It is an attempt to keep a living viable community in the rural areas. We would be far more honest if we spelt out our long-term regional objectives to the farmers, but I fear that, as usual, they will never be told how much or what food they will be expected to produce. We shall continue down that road and cause more problems than ever before.

Farmland and Rural Development Bill

[Lords]

10.44 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I had the great fortune and privilege to be a member of the Standing Committee which considered the Bill, and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the skill, ingenuity, courtesy and kindness with which he steered the Bill through, and for his grasp of the subject, which all my hon. Friends will appreciate.

It would be unfortunate if I rehearsed at this late hour all the arguments that were put forward by hon. Members on both sides of the House, because my right hon. Friend will have taken them all on board and looked at the sense of them, but I want to raise one point. The Bill is about land use. It is a modest proposal—not something to get excited about or to make long speeches about. It will make only a tiny difference to the general farming pattern in Britain.

However, the Bill is a major step in a change of attitude which the Government are courageously formulating. The farmer must now find alternative sources of income from other uses of his land with which to supplement his income for which, in the past, he depended on the Government. He must now go to the private market and find a new source of income for the land for which the Government previously paid him. That is the critical point of the Bill. It is trying to encourage the farmer to find a new vehicle for exploiting his innovatory talents so that he can find a new way of generating income. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend considers that to be a fair synopsis of what he is trying to do.

The alternative land use that the Bill will develop will reduce food production only a little. However, the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) raised a real point, although he may not have put it in quite the modest and courteous way that he usually does, when he suggested that farmers were greedy. That may have been a slip of the tongue, but it did suggest something a little more sinister. The farmers are not greedy; they are desperately trying to make good a falling income. But as a result of that they may be tempted to make use of land which in the past has been scrubland and an important habitat for wildlife which they have not previously thought of using, but which, in view of the new pressure on them to make good a falling income, they may feel forced to use.

In that context, let me mention that in my constituency there is a dying race of bird called the cirl bunting. There are only 80 pairs left in Great Britain. I am sure that many hon. Members have spent many hours in South Hams looking for the cirl bunting. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds arranged for me on Sunday morning a few weeks ago to spy out the land on and around East Prawle and East Portlemouth and spot the cirl bunting. This may not be the right time to describe the beauties of the bird, but the point is that the cirl bunting needs the coastal scrubland which is peculiar to South Hams.

The farmer in this area could be tempted to apply for a grant to plant trees on his land. In that event, he might also be tempted to say, "I am losing good acres on which I have produced food. I will plough up this scrub land." As that land is important for the survival of the bird it could mean the destruction of another rare species in Britain.

Not all hon. Members will agree that preserving the cirl bunting is of great importance, but the point I have made is indicative of the dangers that are inherent in the Bill. I hope the Minister, if he does not mention the cirl bunting by name, will refer to the problem that was raised eloquently, if unfortunately in some respects, by the hon. Member for Workington.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I too enjoyed serving on the Standing Committee. Does my hon. Friend think it possible that cirl buntings are down to the last 80 pairs because they do not have enough trees in which to nest?

Mr. Steen: They do not nest in trees.

My fear is that farmers may take advantage of the Bill to grow trees. The Government's whole land use policy may also encourage farmers to make good the shortfall in their incomes not only by laying down the 20,000 golf courses which land owners have said would solve our agricultural problems, but will go in for housing. There is a great threat to the countryside in the south of England by ever more houses being built on the green belt and on green field sites, and I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) will raise that issue on the Adjournment.

I fear that farmers who cannot produce food on their land and who are desperate to achieve alternative land use will be obliged, if they can do so, to sell land for house building. Not only will that destroy the agricultural potential of that land, but it will destroy wild life and habitat.

I feel sure that the Minister, in his broad compass approach to these matters, will deal with the problem of the urban sprawl of housing in the south and the dangers of the Bill becoming a vehicle for the exploitation of farm land for purposes other than agriculture.

10.53 pm

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) was right to choose reality as his text, because the Bill provides vast enabling powers to the Minister, should he wish to use them, and should the Treasury agree to their use. On that basis—not that it is the only one—the measure is to be welcomed.

The Bill does not refer only to afforestation, but as we import over 90 per cent. of the timber used in Britain, afforestation is a sensible course to pursue. Apart from that—and whether or not the cirl bunting of South Hams is helped to multiply—it gives us a chance to save and promote agriculture and rural England for those who should live there.

It is no secret that every agricultural area or village is, in effect, its own minor green belt in which live excellent people who have retired from the cities, but who were not originally rural residents. While my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) seems to be strongly against the provision of more houses, he should be aware that in the adjacent constituency of Devon, North we want many more houses for our young people, who at present cannot afford the few houses that are being provided.

I welcome the Bill, because it is sensible and logical, but it is only fair to say that in its totality it bears upon the whole future of agriculture, if there is to be a future. We can destroy agriculture, as indeed this nation has

[Mr. Tony Speller]

destroyed other industries—for example, shipbuilding, steel and others—whether wilfully or otherwise. It is easy to lose industries in the name of efficiency.

Hon. Members have mentioned scrubland. Many of my constituents work incredibly hard to make upland scrubland productive. It is an unwise world that says, "Let the farmer go; let the scrubland stay," because sooner or later we will need the food that that scrubland can provide. It would be an unwise Administration, which this is not, or unwise Members of this House, which we are not, who would allow us to destroy our agricultural existence for the benefit of some largely plasticised green belt, which, if we are not careful, will spread across the country. We can buy cheap food at the moment, but the moment that we cannot provide food for ourselves will be the moment when the prices will go up. The Bill is welcome, not just for the afforestation provisions, but for the other things that it will allow.

In the county of Devon, about 5 per cent. fewer people will be working the land 12 months from now. If that continues, we will not have a rural population to talk about developing or assisting. We will have a selection of retirement homes dotted round a countryside that we have deliberately denuded in our folly. The golf courses may come—I welcome golf courses. But, more than that, I welcome the Bill because without the rural development that it can help to bring we will not have the people in the village or in the small town to retain the school, the church, the doctor, the health centre, the scout troop, the guide troop and all the things that make the countryside far more worth living in than the town for people like myself. That is not to be unkind to the town, but, it is illogical if everyone says, "Infill the town," when what they are actually saying is, "Neglect the countryside."

I give my full support to the Bill. It could turn out to be a more major measure than most of us believe. It is important not to destroy the countryside in the name of some form of conservation, which may mean buntings for all but houses for none.

10.58 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I support the Bill as far as it goes.

It was said by some hon. Members in Committee, and it was repeated during the debate on agriculture earlier this evening, that some local authorities have an oppressive attitude towards any change in farming activities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has sent a succession of circulars to local authorities suggesting, for example, a modest change from farm activity to perhaps camping or riding. These suggestions have been resisted by local authorities. My right hon. Friend should remember that local authorities must be brushed up on change and be reminded of their obligations, or they will restrict farming—as many of them do—with the same old restricted planning pattern that they have used for old and out-of-date farm buildings.

Clause 2 deals with farm woodland schemes. Some people believe that the development—12,000 hectares, or 30,000 acres, a year, making a total of 100,000 acres over three years—is tiny. It is a step in the right direction, and I do not regard it as insignificant. The replanting of 100,000 acres over three years could make a great impact on the countryside. What I do not like about the Bill, and what I had hoped to mention tonight in debates on my amendments, which unfortunately were not selected——

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Nor were mine.

Sir John Farr: I share my hon. Friend's sorrow.

My anxiety is that the farm woodland scheme is permanent. The trees will be there for ever. The scheme may be right—indeed, the Government are convinced that it is right. The trees will be there for our lifetime, and probably for our children's lifetime, especially if we plant the hardwoods that the Government are making financially advantageous. But is it the right thing to do now? Should we commit ourselves to taking out of agricultural production for ever 100,000 acres of land, whether it be good or bad quality, without considering alternatives, such as less input, less output?

If there were a sudden need for increased agricultural production—perhaps because of a complete change in the political climate—we could not retrieve land planted with trees. But if land was on a low-intensity regime, output could be stepped up overnight and we could meet any critical demand that we cannot foresee now. I hope that there will never be such demand, but I had hoped that the Bill would give the Secretary of State power to include a modest de-intensification scheme.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and other hon. Members asked about the monitoring of the complex requirement to plant 100,000 acres of land with trees. Does my right hon. Friend have any idea of how it will be checked? Although I do not expect that the average farmer or landowner would try to breach the regulations, if it is known that there will be no supervision of the system, that will encourage people who are in a bad way financially—many of my farming constituents have never been worse off—to bend the system. It is asking for trouble.

The Bill could have been much improved. Sooner or later—I hope sooner—the Government will have to introduce a scheme of de-intensification. It has been demanded by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I am sorry that my right hon. Friend did not see fit to include it in the Bill.

11.2 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I agree wholeheartedly with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) said.

When replying to this short debate, will my right hon. Friend the Minister give an assurance on how clause 2 will be used? We have lost many thousands of acres of moorlands. A quarter of the north Yorkshire moors have been ploughed up—much of it to produce surplus grain. We have lost hundreds of acres on Exmoor, and the same can be said of nearly all our moorlands. My right hon. Friend knows, too, that many recreations depend upon open countryside. Some time ago, in preparing a talk for a conference, I discovered 20 such recreations. I need hardly remind my right hon. Friend that those recreations are carried out by taxpayers, and our objective must be to reconcile the interests of taxpayers with those of farmers. We shall not achieve that objective if even more of our moorlands are lost to afforestation.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend will give an undertaking to the many people worried about the matter that clause 2 will not be used in a way that will result in the loss of even more of our moorlands.

11.4 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I have already welcomed the Bill, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will not take exception to my continued expressions of pleasure and welcome for it.

It is right that we should go in this direction. As several hon. Members have said, the Bill opens the door to a new approach to supporting agriculture in its widest context, not merely as food production, which is how we have always thought of it, but as the husbandry and management of the land.

I fully recognise the need to try out the schemes before they are let loose and expanded across the countryside. I accept what my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said when winding up the previous debate: it is necessary to prove the schemes. We must be able to do so.

Hon. Members on both sides have mentioned monitoring. I want the scheme to work, and I believe that it will, but I want to be able to say in two years' time that it works because we have proved that it does. It is probably impossible to monitor it on every holding that goes into planting woodlands, but we should be able to do some sort of sampling to prove that there is a reduction in yield on the farms in question. If there is a proven reduction in output on those holdings, that justifies the scheme and will justify hon. Members in asking to double or treble its size in a couple of years. We can do that only if it has been proved to reduce surpluses.

I am slightly concerned about the level of compensation for loss of income on the woodlands scheme. I realise that that is not cast in stone in the Bill, but income replacement must recognise the role of fixed costs on the farm. Merely converting 5, 10 or 20 per cent. of the land to tree planting does not reduce fixed costs in proportion. That is the opposite of economies of scale and we must all understand that.

Unless the acreage payments during the growing period at least replace some of the fixed costs a greater burden will be placed on the remaining acreage. We have already heard that there is no way in which the remaining acreage can carry that extra burden. The upshot will be less interest in the scheme from farmers, because they will realise that the bottom line of their farm business will get worse, not better.

I fully understand the impossibility of index-linking. That idea was proposed in the Standing Committee, on which I was pleased to serve. I also understand that my right hon. Friend has the Chief Secretary to the Treasury continually looking over his shoulder at every penny he spends. I hope that he will at least undertake to review the payments regularly to ensure that they are sufficient to encourage farmers to move into these schemes. Otherwise, a highly welcome and acceptable change in direction could be spoilt for that odd ha'p'orth of tar.

11.4 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): It has already been noted that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) was not joining in the debate this evening because he chaired our proceedings in Committee. I put on record my appreciation of the work that he did as Chairman of the Committee. He brought to it a fairness and expertise that was appreciated by all.

I also put on record the support that I received from my hon. Friends in Committee; several of them spoke in the debate tonight. This may be a rare occurrence, but I thank the Minister, too, and congratulate him on the approach he adopted in Committee. There was a bipartisan approach to the Bill and I am pleased to say that its progress was helped, if not accelerated, by the thoughtful and courteous way in which the Minister responded to the amendments that we tabled, many of which were probing amendments.

In opening the debate the Minister said that during the proceedings an announcement was made after the Budget about the introduction of a new woodland grants scheme. He said that the scheme would replace the old arrangements because they were unsatisfactory and had led to a great deal of tax abuse. We certainly support the introduction of the new scheme and hope that it will remove the opportunity for abuse of the tax regime. However, the Minister's stated objective will not be achieved because, on the basis of figures provided by his Department, about 250,000 hectares of land were cleared for planting under the old regime and the tax concessions will last for the next five years. That fact should be set against the Government's much vaunted statement that they put and end to these abuses. It is unsatisfactory that these tax abuses will continue for another five years, and I hope that the Committee examining the Finance Bill will remedy that defect.

We are not entirely happy with the new grants, although they are important in that they form the basis of the grants available under clause 2 of the Bill. Despite all the arguments and the protestations from the Government, the planting grants still favour coniferous afforestation. It was our view, and we thought that it was the Government's view following Government statements, that the planting of broadleaf trees should be encouraged. The new grants scheme and the new financial arrangements mean that continuous incentive is given to coniferous afforestation.

The Minister has had one close look at the reports of our debates in Committee. I suggest that he has another close look, when he will see that the evidence that we received from, among others, the Oxford institute, showed that the balance was still in favour of coniferous afforestation. I think that at one point the Minister agreed with us about that. That is not a sour note, but it is a note of disagreement between us.

We did not oppose the Bill on Second Reading and I like to think that in Committee we approached the Bill constructively. We offered amendments and views and hoped that the Minister would take note of them. He said that he would take notice of some of them. We have no intention of opposing the Bill on Third Reading, but I should like to reinforce a couple of points. This is an enabling Bill. We look forward to the secondary legislation which, I presume, will be introduced next month. I hope that the Minister's mind is still open and that perhaps we can persuade him on one or two points, as some hon. Members have attempted to do in the debate. He need not respond to my questions now, but perhaps he will see whether there is still room for manoeuvre in the statutory instrument.

[Mr. Ron Davies]

The matter of consultation has been raised in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was the first to raise it and he did so in response to a brief from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which, I am sure, assisted all Members in Committee. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) supported my hon. Friend the Member for Workington and spoke in particular about the cirl bunting. I was disappointed that he was not equally vociferous in Committee and did not use his vote there to support the cirl bunting as he used it to support it in this debate.

While the hon. Gentleman was speaking I had a look at the Committee *Hansard*. On Third Reading the hon. Member for South Hams spoke for seven minutes, but during the whole of the Committee proceedings he managed only three interventions which between them made four paragraphs. On my calculation that is one and a half minutes. He also made three sedentary interventions. He voted against an amendment of ours that would have provided precisely the sort of protection that he argued for the cirl bunting, thereby denying the protection that he is now vociferous in advocating.

I suggest to the hon. Member for South Hams that we have both learned something from the debate. I have learned not to rely on his vote following his voice in Committee, and he has learned that before he makes interventions on Third Reading he should check his actions in Committee to see whether he can justify his comments on Third Reading.

The question of consultation has been raised. We are particularly concerned to ensure that there are safeguards for areas of high landscape or environmental value. Areas of outstanding natural beauty are excluded from the consultation arrangements. We do not wish to see coniferous afforestation in such areas unless there has been adequate consultation. If there has been consultation and it is proved that the afforestation is not damaging to the landscape, we have no objection, but there should be consultation in respect of such areas. Unfortunately, although the Bill provides for the Minister to undertake that consultation, it does not require him to undertake it and I hope that he will consider that point further, even at this late stage.

The question of monitoring has been raised by the hon. Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for South Hams, by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington and by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), who frequently joins us in these agriculture debates. I hope that the Minister will consider the question of monitoring for the following reasons.

First, if the Bill is to provide a scheme that will, of its nature, be experimental, there must be a measure of assessing that experiment. If it is a scheme on which there will be further developments, the effectiveness of the scheme must be properly evaluated.

Secondly, the broadleaf percentage should be high and increasing. Unless there is a proper measure of assessment and monitoring, the Government will not know what factors control the broadleaf component, what the damage is or what the consequences are of the relative percentage between broadleaf and conifers. It would be useful for the House to know how the forestry industry and farmers are responding and whether they are planting broadleaf or coniferous woodlands. Without that measure, provided for in the Bill, we shall not have that information.

Thirdly, the Minister said that the grant rates might change. Unless there is more monitoring and an understanding of the economy of the farms involved in the scheme, how will the Government know the relevance of grant rates? Will they be increased or reduced, or will the balance between broadleaf afforestation and coniferous afforestation be changed? For those reasons, the Minister should reconsider the question of monitoring. I do not expect him to answer those detailed points now, but I hope that he will consider them before bringing forward a statutory instrument.

The hon. Member for South Hams raised the question of displacement. By displacement, we mean that a farmer might seek to afforest part of his holding but then replace that agricultural land by ploughing up an area that might be of the highest environmental value, although not in agricultural use. The hon. Gentleman described that as scrub land. We are concerned to prevent that. The Minister recently said:

> "If I could find a satisfactory way to tighten the system, I should implement it."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 29 March 1987; c. 125.]

Has he found a satisfactory way? Can he now offer us some practical evidence that he intends to live up to his words?

I understand that the Government will have a tight way of measuring and assessing the new set-aside proposals. If they can find a way of measuring set-aside, with all the hazards that that involves, I am sure that they can find an adequate way of assessing these proposals. The Government should do that to ensure a diminution in agricultural production and to provide the environmental protection that we are seeking.

Fourthly, we must consider the question of planting rates. This was the subject of debate in Committee, and we argued that if the applicant for grant wished to plant at less than the normal density, full grant should nevertheless be paid. For example, some farmers would want to plant to the highest levels of coniferous or broadleaved, but at a lower density to ensure rides, because if they want to develop a pheasant shoot, a ride that has not been planted would be a requirement. We argued that if they set aside areas from within the total holding, and planted only 70 or 80 per cent. of it, because of the high fixed cost of, for example, fencing, the maximum grant of 100 per cent. should be paid. That would encourage lower density forestry rather than the higher density traditional forestry.

The Minister did not give way on that in Committee, and said that the planting was primarily for timber production. In as much as the land cleared for planting exceeds by something like a factor of two the amount of land that the industry feels that it is necessary to afforest, we do not think that the argument about the primacy of timber production exists any longer. I ask the Minister to look at that again.

Many areas of derelict woodland are not in timber production but have the highest environmental value and are a major component of the farm as an on-farm woodland, and at least some, if not the whole, of the financial provision should be made so that farmers can achieve proper control of woodland production in areas of

neglected woodland. We were thinking in particular of the woodlands in the less-favoured areas, because they have particular financial problems.

Those are some of our concerns. I hope that the Minister will at least listen to the representations which have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and which are shared by people outside the House. I hope that he will be able to satisfy us a little more on these points when we debate the statutory instruments.

11.21 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I thank the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) both for the courtesy of his remarks, and for the conduct of the Opposition case in Committee. It was a happy and pleasant Committee, which did its job well, and that was not least because of the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Ceridigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). I am not sure whether he would have agreed with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) about the milking sheep unit that took five years to set up. I wonder whether that was because of, or in spite of, his help. He is right to suggest that there is no perfect answer to our problems, and the idea that, by some miracle, low income farming can provide an alternative, without considerable research, is mere idle speculation. It will provide some of the answers, but it cannot be seen as a panacea, and too many panaceas are presented by people who often know little about the practicalities of farming, although the hon. Gentleman is certainly not one of those.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) congratulated my right hon. Friend the Minister and me on some of the stances that we have taken. In his close concern for the Bill, he reminded us of some of problems of agriculture with which the Bill does not attempt to deal. I have no doubt that other legislation will be introduced to solve the problems that he has raised, and on that occasion we can deal with the points that he made.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke about monitoring, and I assure him that we shall monitor the scheme carefully, because every request for support will come to the Ministry, as well as to the Forestry Commission, and there will be occasions on which the Ministry will refuse, because the land is not suitable, or because the plan is thought not to be what we want, so the monitoring will start then.

Secondly, we shall have to monitor a sufficient number to ensure that what has been claimed as the plan is the plan that is carried out, for people will, in some cases, be paid a different sum because of the nature of the trees that are planted. Obviously we shall have to monitor that aspect. We shall have to monitor also to see whether the planting meets the purposes for which it was undertaken.

It is difficult to devise a monitoring system that will with absolute certainty link particular amounts of production from the total farm with the effect of a certain amount of afforestation of woodlands. For example, the woodlands might be started in a year in which farming activity was hit by very poor weather and production from the rest of the farm in that year was very low. If one monitored the situation three years later, one might find a considerable increase in production. However, that might have more to do with the weather than with the fact that perhaps a very small amount of land had been set aside for woodlands. It is not possible to make direct comparisons, but we shall certainly undertake direct monitoring of the kind for which the hon. Gentleman asks.

I disagree with the hon. Gentleman in his concern that, because of the woodlands scheme, farmers are likely to be pressed into bringing into production areas of their farms which are not currently in production. If a farmer had such an area and was so pressed, he would be able to bring it into production whether or not there was a woodlands scheme. Indeed, in many ways he might be more likely to do so because he would not have the advantages that a woodlands scheme would give him to use for woodlands land that perhaps would not be suitable for cereal production.

The hon. Gentleman applied himself to the real problem, to which I referred in Committee, that there are certain types of habitat and wild land in the ownership of farmers which we would much prefer not to be turned into productive agricultural land. Indeed, the changes made to grant structures over the past few years have been aimed at not helping farmers to do that. We have also implemented grant aid to help people return to having more hedges and trees, and the like.

Hon. Gentlemen opposite have raised perfectly reasonable points, but I do not believe that the problems they mentioned are directly connected with the woodlands scheme. I do not see an easy way of stopping farmers from undertaking, at their own expense, that which most of us would prefer them not to undertake—except that there is a growing understanding of the damage that such action can cause not just to individual farmers but to the farming community as a whole—who know that its reputation can be very much affected by the actions of an individual.

I hope that the Public Accounts Committee will not need to look unhappily upon the results of the scheme, for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture was himself once a Treasury Minister and he is more keen on monitoring even than the hon. Member for Workington. Were I to propose any scheme that was not properly financially controlled, my right hon. Friend would use his superior office and power to cut me down at once. I assure the hon. Gentleman that that is so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When grant applications are made, will assurances be sought from farmers that certain land in their ownership might not have its use changed in the way that I suggested might be the case?

Mr. Gummer: There is no such formal requirement in the Bill. However, our experience with the ESAs has shown that the people on the ground who are concerned with these matters are increasingly knowledgeable in conservation, so applications will be carefully considered. If circumstances arose in which we felt that an application was marred by other intentions, we would see to it that those other intentions were not carried out. I cannot make a formal commitment, but that is the spirit in which we are approaching the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) called this a modest Bill. In one sense, of course, it is; no vast sums are available. In another sense, however, it is not. First, the British Government are entering into a very long-term commitment to enable people to grow trees. I follow the view of history given to us by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). Even five years ago, I

[Mr. Gummer]

cannot imagine that people would have believed that the Treasury might consider such a long-term commitment reasonable. It is a major achievement. It has not happened in other countries, but it is happening in Britain, and it will make a considerable difference. We now have a different attitude to woodlands.

The support for marketing and feasibility studies is a crucial part of helping farmers to develop that different attitude. It emerged in Committee—from hon. Members on both sides—that farmers are not natural foresters. It is quite difficult to change their approach so that they see trees as a crop, but the Bill makes a major move in that direction. The phrase "modest proposal" is perhaps better seen in the Swiftian context than in any modern one.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East gave us a salutary reminder of 14 years ago, when people feared a major worldwide food shortage and starvation because of the growth in the population. The Government are determined not to put land permanently out of agricultural use in a way that would endanger the future if the position changed dramatically. We must learn that we were wrong 10 or 14 years ago, when we thought that the world would be one of continuous shortage. We cannot be absolutely sure that our present best analysis—that it will be a world of surplus—will continue ultimately to be so. We must act on it, because it is the best that we have, but we can all produce scenarios in which it would not apply.

For my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), that is the protection against his fear that the land will be used for house building, concretisation and so forth. In that event, it would not be available for agriculture were circumstances to change. Woodlands, farm diversification, recreation and golf courses are sensible uses of the land because they enable the land to be used again for agriculture. In the end, the provision of food for our people must be the primary demand of any Government.

Mr. Steen: Is my right hon. Friend saying that he will discourage the Department of the Environment from allowing widespread building on land in the south of England that is currently used for agriculture?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend must understand that the Department of the Environment needs no discouragement from me. The Department has made it absolutely clear that it intends to protect the green belt and look after the very interests that he mentions. I want to encourage the Department to do what it is doing now—to join me in trying to persuade planners to be a little more flexible, in areas where the pressure is not of that kind, towards farmers who want to diversify and provide jobs in country areas which are essential so that those areas do not become museums but remain work places

That is the major importance of the Bill. We want a living countryside; we want a working countryside. We do not want a Marie Antoinette countryside. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) about the need to ensure that planners take the problems seriously. I underline also what he has said about farmers looking after the land.

I have sympathy with the belief of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) that we should have the ability to de-intensify. I am sure that he will be comforted to know that if his amendments had been accepted and written into the Bill the Ministry would not have had powers additional to those that it already has. Under the European Communities' extensification plans, we would be able, by laying orders before the House, to do exactly what my hon. Friend wishes. I ask him to allow us to proceed in a way that makes sense. We are committed to present a system of set-aside and a system for the extensification of holdings. We must proceed in that way in accordance with the timetable that has been laid down by the Community, which is one that we would wish to follow.

The set-aside will be established first, and that will be followed by an extensification scheme. Extensification is a more difficult task than the establishment of a set-aside scheme for it involves a form of monitoring that we have not yet crack painted. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that there is a real problem. How should we lay a reasonable system that will satisfy the Public Accounts Committee upon a scheme for extensification? It is difficult to determine the base line and thereby to demonstrate that there has been a real diminution in production in those terms. We have not yet produced the answer, but I hope that we shall be able to do so.

Mr. William Ross: I apologise for intervening at such a late stage in the Minister's remarks. I wish him to appreciate that the planting of trees is a long-term project. If it is found after 14 or 15 years, for example, that the land is needed for other purposes, we shall not be justified in cutting down the trees at that stage. Furthermore, it will not be easy to bring the land back into production. It will be a costly business, however, to wait until the trees grow to maturity and then to bring the land back into production. For example, all the roots will have to be removed. If there is to be a land bank, as it were, and extensification, surely sheep grazing will be a more reasonable approach.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to take an alternative course when I believe that we must take both approaches. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir. R. Body) has said, we are talking of large areas and a wide range of considerations. There is no one answer, and woodland can be only one part of our approach. I have no doubt that other elements of it will be extensification, set-aside and diversification. There will be low-input farming and some organic farming. If we allow woodlands to be a part of our approach, that does not mean that we remove permanently the possibility of agriculture being introduced within that scheme. Of course, it would not be easy to return the land to agriculture directly. Indeed, it would not be possible to do so for some time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston talked about moorland. We have framed the Bill extremely carefully and its provisions have been changed very much from the original proposals to try to meet the problems that my hon. Friend has in mind. That is why we have talked about improved grassland, although there is a restricted amount of land that can be used for that purpose. In considering grant aid for the planting of woodland, we would not agree to provide it if we considered that there were important environmental

reasons against doing so. The arguments that my hon. Friend advanced are precisely those that we shall be taking into account.

I am loth to give a guarantee that in no circumstances will there be a slip-up. I do not intend that moorland that should be an open area should be turned into woodland. That is not the purpose of the Bill, and I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall carefully keep in mind the responsibility that the Government placed with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for the first time in history to take as one of its requirements environmental needs as well as direct agriculture needs and food production.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) pressed the point of monitoring. I hope that I have answered that. I understand his question on loss of income. We will be reviewing the payments. We made it quite clear that after three years we would do so. It will not be tied to the cost of living because that would be the wrong way of looking at it and I cannot guarantee that we would be increasing the figures. However, we shall certainly be reviewing the payments, as he asked.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) asked a range of questions. We intend to use the experience of the ESAs. He was gracious enough to say that experience had shown that his original fear, which was that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was the wrong body to control the ESAs and that it should perhaps be done through a third party such as the Countryside Commission, was groundless. I hope that I can ask him to accept that his fears may be groundless in other areas. *[Interruption.]* I hope that time will tell and that in the future the hon. Gentleman will not be as unhappy as he is now. He will discover that, where there is any doubt or concern, we will take the necessary steps to consult people who can give us advice. We intend to be careful about conservation needs and to ensure that proper decisions are made. Those decisions will be taken particularly carefully when it comes to environmentally important areas.

The hon. Gentleman's concerns on mixed planting and other matters are not well-founded. However, I shall look at them again, as he asked in the preparation of the statutory instruments.

This Bill has been welcomed on both sides of the House. It is modest only in the sense that it is experimental and because we have restricted it by insisting on cash limitation, hectarage limitation and other things to ensure that we do not run before we can walk. However, it is not modest in that it makes a major change in the way in which the Government look at the countryside and the agricultural community. That change has been made necessary by current conditions and we have made the change before almost all our continental partners. In that we can honestly say that we are leading Europe to a better understanding of a proper partnership between the farmer and the conservationist.

We believe that the farmer is the best conservationist of the countryside. To be that, he must, in a time of surplus, be helped because he will need to change not only his farming methods but his habits and the habits of his forefathers. He will have to see woodlands as a crop. He will have to look for methods of diversification. He will need to see new ways of using the land. All that demands of the farmer a considerable amount of change. The Bill, when it becomes an Act and when the statutory instruments are laid, will give him a chance to make that change more effectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Green Belt (Urban Development)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Lennox-Boyd.*]

11.43 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Mr. Deputy Speaker, with my agreement and that of my hon. Friend the Minister, my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) hope to catch your eye during the debate. I see also that my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), who I know is particularly interested in this subject, is present, as is my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen).

The debate concerns the green belt and its necessary preservation. Fifty years ago, something happened which changed the lives and the environment of Londoners and provided us with a constant blessing. The London and Home Counties (Green Belt) Act 1938 was passed to protect and preserve the swathe of green land then surrounding London. From that time onwards, the urban sprawl was halted; the concrete jungle ceased to encroach on the English countryside. A simple proposition—a presumption against planning consent for urban and residential development—has sufficed to preserve London's green lungs for half a century.

The green belt is not sacrosanct, and there have been exceptions to the general rule. Some development, consistent with the overall policy, has been allowed. There is scope for developments serving agricultural and recreational needs that retain the green fields and enable the city dweller more fully to enjoy his natural heritage.

There is, however, constant pressure on local planning authorities in the south-east to make more land available for development and to meet the increasing demand for housing. The very attractiveness of areas such as my own, on the edge of the green belt, has increased the demand and forced up the value of existing sites or added to the pressure for infilling or backfilling, to the detriment of the local environment. Local authorities are continually urged by their residents to resist higher densities, and they try to do so, but they constantly lose cases on appeal to the Secretary of State who—all too often contrary to an approved local strategic development plan—allows higher densities and lower standards. If I have one criticism of my right hon. Friend it is that too often he appears to want to deregulate our planning controls. Deregulation is a good policy in certain fields of activity but it cannot and must not apply to planning law.

If housing in established residential areas is growing increasingly more expensive, the landowner and farmer who owns land in the green belt on the fringe of London sees himself as living on a gold mine with nothing but the green belt policy separating him from a huge fortune. There is a lot of money to be made from getting planning consent for development in the green belt, but the public and the public interest demand that the policy be maintained.

The green fields between urban London and the M25 motorway are precious to Londoners. They serve the ecological, social and economic needs of London and it would be an act of ministerial vandalism to destroy them by allowing them to be used for commercial or urban development. If the developers want to satisfy the increasing demand for housing and office premises, we should insist that they build in the existing urban areas and the inner city and not on green field sites.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Is my hon. Friend aware that the land register already shows 100,000 acres of land in public ownership which is vacant, dormant, derelict or underutilised and which is still not being used for housebuilding? Although the Government are committed to getting rid of public vacant land, the speed at which they are doing so is such that it will not be until the year 2500 that the land will be properly used. Does my hon. Friend agree that public vacant land is one of the major problems that are causing developers to go into the green fields and into the green belt? They are not using the land that is going to waste.

Mr. Stanbrook: That is an astonishing fact and I hope that the Government will turn potential developers' eyes towards land that is available to them and away from green field sites.

In 1986 a farmer in my constituency who owns some 500 acres of good farming land abutting on the M25 joined forces with the Prudential corporation and put in an application for planning consent to develop his land on a scale that takes one's breath away. He proposes a huge shopping and commercial complex covering 1,700,000 sq ft of floor space with parking for 6,000 cars. The catchment area on which it will draw is expected to include places within 30 minutes' driving time, which would cover more than 2 million people. The effect would be to draw on people as far away from Orpington as Rochester, Maidstone, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Greenwich, Bexley and Lewisham.

The effect on local shopping centres, trade, firms and businesses in my constituency and those of my hon. Friends in the London borough of Bromley would be devastating. The proposed floor space is one and a third times greater than the entire floor space of all the shopping facilities in Orpington. The traffic generation would be enormous. At peak times it would involve 30,000 to 60,000 movements in the Orpington area alone. With the addition of the service traffic required to supply such a massive development, the effect on the M25, which is already working to capacity, could be disastrous.

The planning authority, the London borough of Bromley, refused the application. It said that development in the green belt was inappropriate, damaging to its character and likely to lead to dangerous traffic congestion. The site is in an area, on the escarpment of the north downs, of outstanding natural beauty. It is covered by public footpaths which I, my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, Councillor Dennis Barkway, the leader of the council, and almost 4,000 local residents traversed on foot last Monday, a public holiday, in protest at the plan. The impact on local shopping areas would be annihilating. Worst of all, approval for such a scheme would drive a coach and horses through the green belt policy.

The proposed developers have appealed. The hearing of the appeal will be on 21 June. Is it conceivable that such a scheme could be allowed to succeed? Do the Government contemplate abandoning the green belt policy? Surely not, and yet why should a huge multi-million pound corporation like the Prudential venture its capital and its reputation on a huge publicity campaign and immense legal costs if it did not expect to succeed?

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): My hon. Friend has made the point that, if permission were granted on appeal, it would drive a coach and horses through the present planning policy. Does he agree that we expect my hon. Friend the Minister to give a clear signal to the potential developers that this appeal is unlikely to succeed and that their efforts are wasted? I understand that the relevant Minister gave such a signal at an earlier stage.

Mr. Stanbrook: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Why should we all go through the agony of doubt, fear and suspicion that the appeal might be allowed if there is no question of its being allowed? I realise that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that the Secretary of State will be called upon to act in a judicial capacity, so we cannot expect her to pronounce on the merits of the case. If so, there must be a better way of stopping the waste of public money and of satisfying the very strong feeling of outrage, than suffering a long drawn-out process extending over two years before we get a rejection of an application which should never have been made in the first place.

I cannot contemplate the political consequences of the appeal being allowed. If it were allowed, the consequences for the Government would be devastating in the south-east. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it plain that the Government stand by the green belt policy and will not allow London's heritage to be sacrificed to private greed.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Member have the Minister's consent to intervene?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member may proceed.

11.53 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on the eloquent but restrained fashion in which he put the case for the people of Bromley against the proposed development at Hewitts farm in the green belt. I must admit that I have received one letter in support of the scheme—it was sent by the planning consultants, representing the Prudential Assurance Company. But I have received scores of letters from individual constituents opposing the scheme. Virtually every residents' association in the area has told me that it considers the scheme to be an outrage.

I realise that the Minister cannot pronounce on the merits of the case tonight, but I am encouraged by the fact that last year, in a restatement of Government policy, she said:

"the Government have also made it clear that large retail stores simply do not belong in green belts. We have also made it clear that developers who pursue proposals for large scale retail developments in green belts to appeal and are unsuccessful may expect to have the costs of any inquiry awarded against them."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1987; Vol. 120, c. 678.]

That seems to be an excellent statement. I hope that my hon. Friend will say again tonight that costs can be awarded against the developer. I hope that she will go further in the next few months. At the moment it is far too easy for developers to appeal against a decision by a local planning committee. They might become more selective in their appeals if they knew that they invariably had to pay the costs of an appeal, whether successful or unsuccessful. Our only real defence against such incessant appeals is to make the appeal process more expensive for the developer.

In this short but important debate we clearly cannot properly discuss the general issue of appeal costs, but I am confident that the Minister will be sympathetic if I write to her later.

11.56 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take it that the hon. Gentleman has leave to intervene.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) for allowing me to contribute to the debate. The site to which he has referred lies in his constituency, but the issue that we are discussing has far wider implications.

The development proposed would affect many of the shopping centres within the borough. It would radically alter the entire rural environment in which my hon. Friend's constituents and mine live, and, of course, it would be completely contrary to the Government's green belt policy.

In reply to a question on 19 November 1986, the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) said:

"There is a general presumption against inappropriate development throughout the green belts".—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. *242*.]

That policy was reiterated by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in a debate that I initiated in July 1987 and it has been spelt out subsequently in planning policy guideline documents issued at the beginning of this year. It was further confirmed in an exchange of correspondence which the Secretary of State had with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) as recently as March.

If the Hewitts farm proposal were allowed it would be contrary to the wishes of the borough council, which has rejected it firmly; it would be contrary to the wishes of the people of the borough as represented by the 4,000 people who accompanied my hon. Friend and me and the leader of the council on our walk through the area that would be affected last Monday, and it would blow the Government's green belt policy to smithereens.

If the proposal were allowed, how could my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State possibly resist similar applications all round London? The result would be that London would rapidly become built up from Trafalgar square in all directions to the M25.

Yet we shall still be going through the procedure—a planning application is put in, it is rejected by the local authority, an appeal is lodged, a campaign is mounted, and there is a public inquiry accompanied by enormous anxiety at great expense. We have already spent 12 to 18 months on this issue. Why do we have to go through all this? My hon. Friend the Minister will tell us when she replies that the law requires that we should, just as she will tell us that because of the law she cannot comment on this case. That we understand, but the law does not have to require that we go through such a charade. We are in a position to alter the law. In the debate that I initiated on 24 July 1987, I urged the Government to take powers to

[Mr. Sims]

designate certain parts of the green belt as inviolate for a period of years during which no planning applications would be entertained.

My hon. Friend the Minister pleaded that there would be practical difficulties in so doing. I have to tell her that I am not persuaded by those arguments. Agreeable as it is to spend a couple of hours on a bank holiday morning in the company of my hon. Friend and the leader of the council, walking through a pleasant country area, it should not be necessary for us to do that as a means of persuading the Government to carry out their own policy. I invite my hon. Friend to look again at a way of avoiding all this cost and distress by adopting my suggestion.

Meanwhile, the Hewitts farm proposal has provoked widespread reaction in the borough of Bromley, in the press, in correspondence, in speeches and in posters, some of it in language which I suspect would be ruled unparliamentary were I to repeat it.

I invite the Minister to tell the Secretary of State that when the inspector's report on the inquiry into the Hewitts farm application arrives on his desk, he should respond to it with the two letter word "No."

12.1 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on his speech and my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) on their contributions. I know that their concerns about the pressures for development and the future of the green belt are shared by many hon. Members, so I welcome this opportunity to set out, once again, the Government's policy and position.

The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington includes substantial stretches of green belt land. Having been a councillor in Bromley for three years, I have personal knowledge and experience of the area and continue to take a close interest in it. I can therefore well appreciate the great value that my hon. Friends, their constituents and visitors place on the countryside in and around the area. I am, of course, also aware that it is the very quality of this countryside, together with the general prosperity and fine residential developments in the area, that make the area so attractive to residents and developers alike.

I make no apologies for these intense pressures for development in my hon. Friends' constituencies and in other constituencies, particularly, but not exclusively, in the south-east. Those pressures are evidence of developers' increasing wish to invest in this country's new-found and continuing prosperity. Such investment is essential to sustain economic growth and to ensure the provision of jobs, houses, shops, leisure facilities and all the other services required by a growing population.

However understandable these pressures for development may be, we would be foolish and shortsighted to respond to them solely with economic objectives in mind. Such an approach would rapidly become self-defeating. It would cause irreparable harm to the countryside that we value so much. The Government remain fully committed to protecting that countryside.

Our policy therefore is, as it always has been, to meet the needs of development, while protecting and enhancing the environment. This is the essential aim of the town and country planning system, which this year celebrates the 40th anniversary of its implementation. The planning system has served the country well and continues to do so. We intend to retain it, while continuing to refine it to improve its performance and efficiency.

I accept that reconciling economic and environmental objectives is often a difficult task. It requires planning authorities, my Department's inspectors and the Secretary of State to reach judgments on finely balanced issues. My postbag shows that in planning it is impossible to reach decisions that please everyone, and I suspect many other hon. Members have similar experience.

It is the purpose of the planning system to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest, not to protect the private interests of one person or group against the activities of another. The question that faces every planning decision-maker is how far a proposed development would affect the locality generally and whether it would affect unacceptably amenities that should be protected in the public interest. The countryside, and in particular the green belt, rank highly among such amenities.

Normally, in the planning system, there is a presumption in favour of development unless it would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance. That is not the case in the green belt, however, where there is an explicit presumption against development except for a limited range of uses.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) suggested that we might go even further and declare parts of the green belt prohibited areas for all planning applications and development. This is an interesting idea, but it would not achieve its objective. Apart from the fundamental questions that the suggestion raises about the basic principles of the planning system, the practical difficulties of defining and identifying areas of extra specially protected green belt would distractingly shift the focus of debate, without necessarily addressing the underlying issues. Moreover, the creation of first-class green belt implies also the creation of second-class green belt with a somehow inferior degree of protection. Our policy is that all green belt is special and that, while all development proposals should be treated on their merits, the developments that are likely to have merit in the green belt are very severely limited.

The detailed policy on controlling development in the green belt, in line with the "presumption against", was first set out in its present form in 1955. We have recently restated it in planning policy guidance note 2. Incidentally, I hope that all hon. Members are aware of these excellent new digests of planning policy, which my Department introduced in January. The policy states that approval should not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings, or for the change of use of existing buildings, other than for a very limited range of purposes. These purposes are agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, and other uses appropriate to a rural area. My hon. Friend will note that that list of purposes does not include major retail development.

The planning policy guidance note to which I have just referred sets out the five purposes of green belts. They are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to

safeguard the surrounding countryside from further encroachment; to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; to preserve the special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration. The Government attach great importance to green belts. Since 1979 the area of approved green belt in England has more than doubled. The area of approved London green belt has increased from 760,000 acres to 1·2 million acres in the same period. There is no question of change in our policy.

We are robust in our defence of the green belt. A corollary of this is that the needs of development must be met elsewhere, again with due sensitivity to the environmental implications. We have a range of policies designed to encourage development in areas where it will be welcomed, particularly in the inner cities, but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in March in his letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), it is simply not practicable to accommodate all development needs in this way. Some new land has to be allocated in the south-east, for housing and employment, with regard to where people wish to live and where businesses wish to locate.

We can, I think, claim a good measure of success in accommodating those aims. Thus, while the south-east has maintained its share of new housebuilding, this has not encroached on London's green belt or on areas of outstanding natural beauty or other statutorily protected areas. Further, the evidence shows that more and more development is taking place on land that was derelict or was vacant land in urban areas. Work done for us by the Ordnance Survey shows that in the past two years or so about 46 per cent. of all new housing throughout the country has been on this type of land, and a survey by consultants has shown that in the south-east the figure was 55 per cent. The rate at which farmland has been taken for development has fallen dramatically in recent years, and in the last five years or so has been at its lowest since records began in the 1920s.

There is sometimes concern about the future of green belt sites which, although not built on or redundant, have deteriorated in quality and may no longer appear to warrant the description green belt. It is sometimes suggested that the improvement of such sites, and their restoration to truly green appearance, might be secured by the proceeds of allowing a small part of them to be developed for residential or commercial use. This is a dangerous path to follow and, while I must respect the doctrine of "each case on its merits", I should not wish to recommend it.

One of the primary purposes of green belts is to separate neighbouring towns by checking the spread of large built-up areas. This purpose can be achieved almost as well by gravel pits or other so-called scruffy parts of the green belt as by a landscape of pristine fields and woodlands. To accept otherwise is almost to encourage dereliction in the green belt in the hope that planning authorities will eventually concede that even development is preferable. However, I remind the House that it is an explicit part of green belt policy that detailed green belt boundaries should not be amended or development allowed merely because the land has deteriorated or become derelict. This is not to say that such land should not be improved, but it means that its deterioration cannot justify its development.

My hon. Friend is particularly concerned about major retail development. Our policy on major retail development in the green belt could hardly be clearer. It is most recently stated in paragraph 15 of planning policy guidance note 6, which states:

> "Proposals for major out-of-town retail development, which may be well over 100,000 sq ft and up to 1 million sq ft or more, have no place in the green belt, where there is a strong presumption against all inappropriate development. Nor are developments on that scale generally acceptable in the open countryside."

Short of taking statutory measures to prohibit major retail development in the green belt even being considered, I doubt whether we could emphasise our policy more strongly.

In case my hon. Friends are still not convinced, I repeat what my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning said at a conference organised by the CBI in October 1986. Speaking about the continuing flow of proposals for vast shopping and leisure complexes, he said:

> "It is difficult to see why major developers and institutional investors should be advancing these giant speculative projects that fly full in the face of long-established green belt policy —a policy to which this Government is fully committed. Any such proposal has, of course, to be considered on its merits and in the light of general policy. Some may come to me on appeal, so I must not name names. There is provision, as there must be, for exceptions to be made in very special circumstances. But by way of general policy I would say that the promoters of some of the wilder schemes have no reason to think that they will succeed in breaching green belt policy."

That was more than 18 months ago, but it remains a waste of time for local planning authorities, local objectors and, not least, my Department's planning inspectors, to have to deal with unrealistic proposals, whether for major retail development in the green belt or for other equally misconceived schemes. As Ministers have said before, those who pursue such schemes to the point of appeal may find that the costs of any inquiry are awarded against them. Whether appellants should bear all or part of the costs of inquiries, irrespective of their justification or outcome, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham suggested, is an interesting proposal, and I look forward to receiving his letter on the matter.

My hon. Friend will have noted that, so far, I have been conspicuously silent about the proposed development that was the principal subject of his speech. I am, of course, very familiar with the development proposals for the Hewitts farm site—even more so following my hon. Friend's description of them. I am also aware of the controversy that they have generated in the constituencies of my hon. Friend and his parliamentary neighbours. However, as my hon. Friend appreciates, I must keep my counsel since, as he said, the proposals are now the subject of a planning appeal currently before the Secretary of State. A number of other major retail schemes around London have reached or are approaching more or less the same stage in the planning process.

Although I cannot comment on the merits of the Hewitts farm proposals, I can confirm the arrangements for the public inquiry that the Secretary of State has ordered to help him to determine this appeal. The inquiry is scheduled to be held at the civic centre, Rochester avenue, Bromley and to start at 10 am on Tuesday 21 June.

In conclusion, I again thank my hon. Friend for raising this important issue tonight. Green belt policy is one of the most successful and enduring components of the planning

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

system and one which, I am sure, will continue to enjoy support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. As my hon. Friend said——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Thursday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 6 May 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Point of Order

9.35 am

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that, earlier this week, I asked for permission to present a petition to the House at this stage. It is the result of my constituents' serious concern at the proposed closure of a school at Coniston. It is a substantial petition. I understand that a further 11 petitions have been put down for presentation this morning.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that I was Government Chief Whip for four years and therefore I know what is likely to delay the business of the day. I do not wish my petition to be the cause of us not moving to the principal business of the day as soon as possible. I am sure that my constituents do not wish their petition to be the cause of the House being delayed in getting to the business. Therefore, I believe that it would be right for me not to present my petition. Although I am not prepared to support the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This should be a point of order, not an explanation.

Mr. Jopling: I am not prepared to support the Abortion (Amendment) Bill as it is, but, despite that, I believe that it would be right for me not to present my petition this morning, nor do I want the Clerk to read out what is a fairly substantial document. I believe that we should move to the principal business of the day as soon as possible and I hope that all those other hon. Members with petitions will take the same course as myself.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before you give your ruling on the point of order raised by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), I ask you to take into account the fact that this morning's business is extremely important—and I do not say that from a purely personal point of view. It may well be, as has happened to me on a number of occasions—not least this week—that not every hon. Member who wishes to express their constituents' views is called during the debate. Therefore, those of us who have come here this morning with their constituents' views put down in a procedurally proper parliamentary petition should at least be allowed to put those petitions forward this morning—especially if we do not get the chance to express our arguments in a speech.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that it would be fair to say that, even on a well-attended Friday morning such as today, it is important that the tradition of presenting petitions to the House of Commons should be maintained. You will have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that the other night there was an attempt by the Leader of the House, who is present today, to introduce a curbing motion to stop petitions being presented. It was objected to and time will have to be found for a parliamentary debate on the matter. Perhaps time could have been allocated this morning—that would have occupied even more time—but some of us are not into that type of tactic.

My request is fundamentally important. I notice this morning that Sir John Banham, the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, is requesting that the Rowntree takeover should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Skinner: I want a statement.

Mr. Speaker: That, too, has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I want to raise a genuine point of order—*[Interruption.]* I was not casting aspersions on anyone and I am sure that all the points of order have been genuine. I tread tactfully.

My point of order relates to your role, Mr. Speaker, as custodian of Back-Benchers' rights. Having scrutinised the amendments to the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, you will be aware that amendment No. 47 stands in my name. That amendment is genuine and important, and I wanted to refer to it during the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would not be in order for the hon. Gentleman to raise that matter. I have made my selection and I do not intend to change it.

Mr. Cohen: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. However, will you reconsider the selections that you have made at some stage during the debate? I should have thought that it was possible for another cluster of amendments to be grouped together for debate. I would hope that it might include my amendment No. 47, which is very important in terms of doctors being sued for negligence and damages. I ask you to consider that during the debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In relation to all the points of order I must state that, as the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) said, the main business today is a very important Bill on which I believe the House wants to reach a decision.

I note that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale does not propose to present his petition. Perhaps others will follow suit. However, I have no authority to stop petitions being presented, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has explained.

Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to remind the House that, under Standing Order No. 132, hon. Members presenting a petition must confine themselves to a statement of the parties from whom it comes, the number of signatures attached to it, and the material allegations that it contains and to reading the prayer to the petition. Hon. Members should not read the whole petition or make a speech about it. I call Ms. Primarolo.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called for the presentation of the petitions. I will take points of order afterwards.

Petitions

Abortion (Amendment) Bill

9.42 am

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I wish to present a petition signed by more than 1,300 of my constituents in connection with this morning's proposed business. It arises from their deep concern about the proposals in the Abortion (Amendment) Bill as it would threaten women and endanger their health.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit of abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I want to present a petition from the men and women in my constituency who have shown their deep concern about the effects that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill will have on women.

Two of the signatories have a special concern. One is a victime of rape, and the other the son of a woman convicted for illegal abortions before the enactment of the Abortion Act 1967. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I wish to present a petition from several hundred of my constituents and others from south Yorkshire in relation to the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. There is deep concern in my constituency about the Bill, and I want to read the contents of the petition to the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind what I said earlier.

Mr. Barron: The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents and people living in Talke Pits, Norton, Kidsgrove and Tunstall to express the deep concern felt in my constituency about the uncertain dangers to health that will arise if the Abortion (Amendment) Bill is passed today.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Cynon Valley, several thousands of whom have written to me in opposition to the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. They are very concerned that the proponents of the Bill give a distorted impression of British abortion law, which is one of the least liberal in Europe. They believe that the way to reduce the number of late abortions is to improve the availability and acceptability of NHS abortion services, to increase contraceptive provision for young people, to offer realistic sex and family life education in schools and to develop more sensitive techniques for the diagnosis of foetal abnormality.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I wish to present a petition from more than 200 men and women from my constituency and from elsewhere in east London and one other from south London.

My constituents are very concerned about the danger to the law as it stands contained in the Abortion (Amendment) Bill with regard to women's health and choice. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I rise to present a petition signed by a number of my constituents about the business before the House today—the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. It has been collected by the "Fight Alton's Bill" campaign of the Polytechnic of Central London students' union. It has a number of sponsors, including Members of the House and important people throughout the community, as well as many important organisations, among them trade unions and women's organisations, the TUC and, incidentally, Liberal Women for Choice.

My constituents are very worried about the effect of the Bill on women's health and rights. They say:

The Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choice, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

The first signature is that of Jan Tallis, chair of the women's equality sub-committee.

I agree with the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I rise to present a petition from my constituents which opposes the attempts of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) to weaken the provisions of the Abortion Act 1967. The petition alleges that

> The Abortion (Amendment) Bill . . . will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

The petition has 54 signatures, and was delivered to me late on Wednesday evening. This is my first and most appropriate opportunity to present it to the House. Although it is not the largest petition that I have presented, it is three or four times more substantial than the number of letters and postcards in support of the Bill that I received while it was in Committee.

The petition concludes:

> Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

I fully support the petition, and only wish that this morning we were discussing a reduction in abortions through improved National Health Service provision.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of several hundred of my constituents. It is headed "Fight Alton's Bill", and states:

> To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.
>
> Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

I entirely support my petitioners.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I beg to present a petition on behalf of several hundred of my constituents. I should like to say in its support that it has been collected in rain and in shine, at street corners and on Saturday mornings, and it is the only voice that women in my constituency can have in the House today. It states:

> To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will, if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.
>
> Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do Vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

I applaud that sentiment, and support the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The first group of amendments——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will take a point of order from the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) first.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is with a sense of deep sadness and real concern that I bring this point of order to your attention. It has always been my intention to try to get the subject of abortion properly considered by the House, on the merits of the issues that have come before us as a result of medical advances, and to get it settled so that it is not constantly raised here.

Therefore, after the Committee stage of the Bill, I went to the Department of the Clerk of the House to inquire exactly how the amendments and the Bill would be handled on Report and Third Reading. I was given to understand that precedent would be followed exactly, and that, indeed, the way in which the amendments on the timing after which——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may have received advice unofficially, but he must bear in mind that the Chair makes the selection of amendments. I hope that he is not querying that.

Mr. Wells: Of course I accept entirely the prerogative of the Chair. We put our trust in the Chair to make these very difficult decisions. I believe that you, Mr. Speaker, and the Clerk's Department have given every consideration to the difficult issues that you have had to consider during the past two weeks, and I am not bringing that into question. However, we have to consider this serious question as a whole in the House. If precedent is not followed by Mr. Speaker's Office and the Clerk's Department, we shall find ourselves in extremely deep water. I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave most careful consideration to my selection of amendments. Precedent has been followed to the extent that the amendments will be voted on as they fall on the Amendment Paper, as would happen in the case of any other Bill before the House.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I must say, with enormous regret, that I believe that the way in which you have selected the amendments is deeply biased, and does not allow——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Lady there. That was an unworthy comment for her to make. I think that the whole House will wish to get on with debating the Bill without raising points of order of that kind with me. May I tell the hon. Lady that the strongest representations were brought to me both by those in favour of the Bill and by those against it, urging me to select amendments which they judged would be in the interests of their respective points of view. I have had to make a very difficult decision about the fairest way of dealing with the matter. I have followed precedent to the extent that the votes will arise as the amendments come on the Amendment Paper. That would be the way in which any amendment would be debated and voted on in any other Bill.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Short: I have not finished my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must wait.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must wait.

Mr. Forth: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that the House can well understand the difficult judgments

[Mr. Forth]

that you have had to make in this matter. I think that you and the House are also aware that there are a number of different precedents that could have guided you.

The point on which I want your guidance, Mr. Speaker, perhaps as much for the future as for now, is this: is it the case that, on all occasions when a Bill is before the House and amendments are tabled, the precedents now being set —regardless of what may have been the case in the past —means that the order in which amendments are taken by the Chair will follow strictly and solely the order in which they are tabled? You will understand that the matter has important implications for the way in which the House conducts its business, and I ask you to give thought to it, Mr. Speaker.

If amendments will be considered only in the order in which they are accepted by the Table Office, hon. Members may be involved in undignified scrambles to get their amendments in first. I believe that you, the Table Office and the Clerks will have to give serious consideration to how you will handle the battle that may occur when hon. Members table their amendments in sequence, if that is to determine the way in which they are considered by the House. That is the important implication of what is happening today.

I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will clarify for the House how the matter is to be handled and whether it is an immutable rule that will apply to all Bills in future.

Mr. Speaker: The same applies to all Bills. There are precedents for altering the order, but every Bill is considered on its merits.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you a question about your selection of the first group of amendments? You have selected new clause 3 for debate with amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42. They have different purposes. I am opposed to new clause 3, but I support amendment No. 41. Will there be a chance to divide on the amendments as well as on new clause 3?

Mr. Speaker: I shall certainly allow a Division on amendment No. 40 or on amendment No. 41.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance and clarification on the point raised by the leader of the Liberal party. New clause 3 does not seem to relate to my amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42, and I am somewhat surprised that they are being taken together.

New clause 3 appears towards the beginning of the Amendment Paper. Therefore, at the end of the first debate on the amendments that you have chosen to group together, we shall presumably be entitled to vote on new clause 3. My amendments, which I shall obviously press to a Division because I believe that they are important, will presumably be considered after the next debate, because they are in a later line of the Bill but are what I would call weak amendments. May I have confirmation of that?

Mr. Speaker: That is absolutely correct.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, and further to what you said a moment ago in response to the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). With this Bill, as with other Bills, the amendments have been selected on their merits. As it appears that the overwhelming interest of the House is to vote on the amendment concerning the period of 24 weeks, how is it possible not to have that amendment at the head of the list of amendments.

Mr. Speaker: As I said earlier, if I had remarshalled the amendments—and it would have been a remarshalling—I could have been accused of favouring one group of hon. Members who favour one method of calling amendments as opposed to the other. I hope that the whole House will accept that the Speaker has a heavy responsibility in selecting amendments. In the circumstances, I have selected them in the same way as I would select amendments to any other Bill that comes before the House. I hope that the House will now get on with debating it and not challenge my selection of amendments. I have given enormous thought to the amendments that should be selected. I believe that I have been fair to all parties who are interested in the Bill, and I hope that we can now proceed to debate it.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to try to help you.

Mr. Speaker: I am deeply grateful, but I call Ms. Richardson first.

Mr. Wells: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Absolutely not. I have called Ms. Richardson.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is about your selection, but it relates to a different point. I am being absolutely serious; it is a matter of life and death.

Amendment No. 36, which is about emergency provisions for abortion, has not been selected. I am not disputing the deep thought that you have given to the amendments, Mr. Speaker, but it could well be that you perhaps did not entirely understand. I shall briefly explain. In the Abortion Act 1967, there is an emergency provision ——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady may not do that. Again, I say to her and to the whole House that I have given the greatest and most careful consideration to the amendments over a long period—ever since they started to come in. I do not propose to change my selection of amendments. We should get on with debating the Bill.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I notice that amendment No. 8, to delete Scotland from the provisions, has not been selected.

Mr. Speaker: I know. I have not selected it.

Mrs. Fyfe *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I have not selected it.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can help me. This is a different and genuine point of order. I know that it is unusual to have a genuine point of order.

Mr. Skinner: Mine are genuine.

Mr. Sedgemore: I defer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Yesterday I went through what I thought was the correct procedure to present a petition to the House. I wonder whether you can tell me whether I did something wrong. I went upstairs to the Journal Office and got the petition signed by somebody with the initials DLR. I went to the Table Office and was told by the Clerks, who are always helpful on such occasions, that the petition was perfectly in order. You did not call it this morning. Therefore, I take it that the petition was not perfectly in order. I shall be grateful if you will tell me why it was not perfectly in order so that I may re-present it.

Mr. Speaker: I shall need to look into that matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are many outside the House who are following our discussions this morning with a great deal of interest. I believe that they expect us to debate the Bill and to come to our decisions in a parliamentary way. To raise points of order with the Chair on matters relating to selection is not the correct parliamentary way of proceeding.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) promised to be helpful. I think we must then get on.

Mr. Skinner: The first thing that I have to say, which will undoubtedly be helpful, is that any serious miscalculation in respect of the petition of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will be resolved. I am certain that you, Mr. Speaker, will ensure that adequate time will be provided later today for my hon. Friend to present his petition and for a report to be made on how the miscalculation occurred.

The other matter that caused a little furore earlier was your comment that, in accordance with precedent, you, Mr. Speaker, have selected the amendments in a certain manner. In answer to an intervention by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth)—it was probably the only constructive thing that he has said in all the years that I have known him—you said that you were dealing with the matter on an ad hoc basis. As you must get these things right for future Bills, you need a form of words that will enable you to clarify the position in relation not only to this Bill but to others. Otherwise, you will be placed in a serious predicament, with people scrambling to table amendments and camping out upstairs to get them tabled in order.

Mr. Speaker: It is rare for the Chair to remarshal amendments. It does not normally happen, and it has not happened today.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on the amendments relating to Northern Ireland. I raise this point, although I am not a Northern Ireland Member. However, it puzzles me that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I give the same answer to the hon. Lady as I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). I have not selected any amendments concerning Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will you, Mr. Speaker, say whether the amount of time spent dealing with points of order will affect the precedents with regard to acceptance of a closure motion, if it is moved?

Mr. Speaker: The Chair would be bound to have to take into account points of order during the forthcoming debate, but I hope that they will be genuine points of order. I shall take one more point of order, but we must then proceed with the business. I wish to call the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), whose petition was, by mistake, not listed.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down please. I said I shall take one more point of order. I call Mr. Andrew Bennett.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I tried to catch your eye earlier, Mr. Speaker, to support my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who raised the question of selection and his disappointment that his amendment had not been selected. On that occasion, you made it clear that it was not possible, as I fully accept, for hon. Members to question your selection of amendments, but you implied that that referred to the debate on this Bill.

As I understand it, your selection refers to today's business. If the business continues beyond today, would you be in a position—perhaps unfortunately for you—to make a new selection? You would then be able to take into account my hon. Friend's amendment and any other amendments that were tabled. It will be a considerable help to my hon. Friend to have an assurance that there would be a completely new selection procedure if we do not complete the business today.

You said, Mr. Speaker, that new clause 3 would be voted on and that amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42 would be voted on at the appropriate point. Will you confirm that, if the closure is moved on new clause 3, voting on amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42 will automatically be taken after 2.30 pm? Will the opportunity to vote on those amendments be lost, if it is not possible to vote on them before 2.30 pm, or is there a procedure by which we can return to those amendments on another occasion?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman well knows that, if the Bill is not completed today—and I think that the House hopes that we shall make progress on it—I should have to reconsider my selection for any subsequent debate.

I reiterate what I have already said about new clause 3. I am prepared to allow the House a vote on either amendment No. 40 or amendment No. 41. They will fall for Division later at their proper place on the Amendment Paper. I now call the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch to present his petition.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am most grateful that, on this morning of passion and fury, you, Mr. Speaker, have put the procedure right and upheld the rights of my constituents to petition against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

The petition is signed by 340 persons living in Hackney, South and Shoreditch and one other person named Ann Clwyd whose address is 70, St. Michael's Road, Llandaff. My petitioners are concerned about the effects of the Bill on the health of women, on their right to choose whether

[Mr. Sedgemore]

they should have abortions and on the fact that they believe that, if the Bill is enacted, it will lead to further attacks on the 1967 Act.

The petition says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of UK Residents Showeth that the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which proposes to reduce the upper limit for abortion will if enacted, restrict women's choices, endanger their health and open the door to further attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable. House do vote against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

I support the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Abortion (Amendment) Bill

As amended, (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 3

APPEALS TRIBUNALS

'After section 5 of the Abortion Act 1967 there shall be inserted the following section:—

"5A(1) In respect of the refusal of an application by a woman for the termination of her pregnancy in terms of section 1 of this Act, or in the case of any delay by the Area Health Board or any of its responsible officers in reaching a decision on such an application, then that woman shall be entitled to make an appeal to the Terminations Appeals Tribunal.

(2) There shall be a Terminations Appeal Tribunal for each Area Health Authority and the Secretary of State shall by order make provision for the establishment, constitution and procedure of the Termination Appeals Tribunal.

(3) The Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1921 shall apply to the Terminations Appeals Tribunal.".'.—*[Mr. Doran.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.14 am

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 40, in clause 1, page 1, line 10, leave out

'on a consultant gynaecologist's recommendation'

and insert

'on the advice of a registered medical practitioner who has been admitted to membership of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists'.

No. 41, in clause 1, page 2, line 10, leave out

'by a consultant gynaecologist and one other registered medical practitioner'

and insert

'formed in good faith, by two registered medical practitioners'.

No. 42, in clause 1, page 2, line 14, leave out paragraph (c).

Mr. Doran: I apologise for my bedraggled state and hoarse voice as I have rushed here this morning from Aberdeen where the Labour party last night won a magnificient victory. It is opportune that I start by mentioning the city that I am proud to represent, because Aberdeen is a city where the laws on abortion have been well tested, not just since 1967, but since the 1930s.

I am disappointed that you, Mr. Speaker, did not choose the amendment relating to the exclusion of Scotland from the operation of the Bill, because Scots law is very different from English law. It is a much more flexible system. There is no stated time limit. The effective time limit in Scotland is 24 weeks because the law says that abortion would be a criminal offence in the case of a viable foetus. It is now medically accepted that a foetus is viable at the age of 24 weeks. I find it distressing that we are talking about time limits when the system in Scotland is quite different and the concept of rigid time limits is quite alien. We have flexibility and that adds to the system.

New clause 3 would amend the Abortion Act 1967 and attempts to do what the Bill does not do. If the Bill is implemented, it will impose a strict time limit with certain minor exceptions. I regard those exceptions as minor, although I know that the hon. Members who propose them do not regard them as such. However, they were presented less in a spirit of improving the legislation than in a spirit of recognising that the Bill had no prospect in the House without a compromise.

There is already a major difficulty in the operation of the 1967 Act. It is well known that the response from the medical profession to the Act is, to say the least, patchy. There are some parts of the country where the Act is operating in the spirit in which it is passed and in accordance with the law. My own city of Aberdeen has long experience of the operation of abortions as a public service to women in need, but there are other parts of the country where the law is operated less satisfactorily.

For example, in Glasgow, the law is operated perfectly satisfactorily in one part of the city, but, if a woman is unfortunate to live in the other part, she has grave difficulty in obtaining an abortion, even if she satisfies the requirements of the 1967 Act. The net result is that over 900 women a year have to leave Glasgow to go south to England where, for the purpose of statistics, they are treated as foreign women. That subject has caused great excitement among those who support the Bill. Nine hundred women leave Glasgow every year and go south for abortions because they cannot obtain them in their native city, regardless of the fact that——

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): My hon. Friend refers to that part of Glasgow where the entitlements under the existing law are not extended to all women. Will he include a reference to Birmingham where the situation is exactly the same? As a result of the conscience clause, which we all respect, women in Birmingham do not obtain their entitlement under the law unless they can afford to go into the private sector. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is deeply wrong?

Mr. Doran: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I was about to turn to the situation in Birmingham which suffers from the same problem as that part of Glasgow to which I referred.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Will my hon. Friend specify the parts of Glasgow to which he is referring?

Mr. Doran: I understand that that is the practice in the southern part of Glasgow, but I do not have details of the hospitals involved. However, I shall find out and tell my hon. Friend later. As I said, 900 women a year leave Glasgow to have abortions, so the record speaks for itself. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said that that is also the position in Birmingham.

I have already expressed my regret that my amendment that would have excluded Scotland from the scope of the Bill was not selected. Equally, I regret that new clauses 1, 2 and 4 were not selected, because they would have put new clause 3 into context. All those new clauses attempted to deal with the difficulties that would arise if the Bill were ever enacted. It lacks flexibility and pays no heed to the existing difficulties that we all wish to avoid.

In Committee I frequently said that I am not in favour of abortion, and I do not think that any of us are. It is something that we all find difficult to accept. However, it exists and, indeed, has existed for as long as there has been birth, which is as long as mankind has existed. There will always be abortion, so it must be within a legal framework. Women are entitled to have an abortion in clean and safe surroundings with medical attention. That did not happen before the 1967 Act, other than in a few areas such as Aberdeen, and that will be the case again if the Bill is passed unamended.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I speak as a biologist. It is often said that we all dislike the concept of abortion, but in fact abortion can be a natural as well as an artificial process. About one third of all abortions occur naturally, without medical help. Medical progress has, to some extent, subverted natural abortion, bringing to full term many babies who would have been aborted naturally but for medical science.

Abortion is not an unnatural process; it is part of nature. In previous times, natural abortion eliminated many of the current problems of foetal abnormality in the later stages of pregnancy. That is especially true of genetic foetal abnormalities, which often conflict with the genetics of the mother through the placenta and produce a natural abortion. We must not think that abortion is altogether unnatural and unpleasant—it is a normal weeding out process——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Interventions must be brief. I have allowed the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) to make a fairly extensive preamble to the new clause and the amendments, which are comparatively narrow. I am sure that he will now address himself to them.

Mr. Doran: I was tempted to intervene on the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), but I resisted. I accept her point because her professional background gives her great experience in these matters. Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also accept your strictures.

The new clause would allow a woman who had been refused an abortion to appeal, although within the context of the 1967 Act it is difficult to determine how such an appeal should be provided. The Act makes it clear that certain acts should not be regarded as criminal in certain circumstances. New clause 4 would have changed the emphasis and the onus so that abortion could be provided in certain circumstances following an application by the woman. Without the benefit of new clause 4, new clause 3 may appear to be lacking something. Obviously, it will need to be amended—presumably in another place—if it is accepted.

I would choose the vehicle of an appeals tribunal, which is a well tried and tested remedy. The major difficulty is the strict time limits. The period of gestation is well known. The time limit in Scotland is, in effect, 24 weeks because of the viability of the foetus, while in England it is 28 weeks because of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929. It is important that members of the medical profession address themselves to time limits—not only those set by law but those that they choose to apply when considering particular cases.

I envisage new clause 3 being a spur to the medical profession to reconsider its practices. I commend to them those followed by the Grampian health authority, which

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recognises that time limits are crucial. If a woman tells her general practitioner that she wishes to be considered for an abortion, that general practitioner follows a procedure established by that health authority. While the woman is still in his surgery, he must immediately contact the obstetrics dept of the local hospital, which must make an appointment over the telephone. The doctor does not have time to follow his usual procedure of writing to the hospital for an appointment, waiting for that to be processed and an appointment sent and then notifying the woman. My health authority has successfully managed to expedite the whole process.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I have just had handed to me letters from 41 doctors in Tower Hamlets, which is in my constituency, dealing with the issues that my hon. Friend is raising. They state:

"As general practitioners in Tower Hamlets, whatever our personal views on induced abortion"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is more of a speech than an intervention, and I find it difficult to relate it to the new clause under discussion.

Ms. Gordon: It deals with the points being raised—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must be brief if she is making an intervention.

Mr. Doran: I entirely accept the point that I think that my hon. Friend tried to make, and I intend to refer later to similar documentation.

The inadequacies in the National Health Service must be remedied, and that is the purpose of the new clause. A survey of general practitioners in the Haringey area attempted to highlight those inadequacies. My knowledge of other areas, especially Glasgow and Birmingham, is that the survey's findings could equally well apply there. Some 41 per cent. of general practitioners said that facilities for abortion within the NHS were inadequate and that there were huge delays in obtaining appointments. Although 53 per cent. of those surveyed referred all women to the NHS, a significant number did not. The two most common reasons for that were women's preference—34 per cent. —and the probable delay in obtaining an appointment —a high figure of 20 per cent. The survey suggested that there was a large overlap between the 34 per cent. for women's preference and the 20 per cent. for fear of delays in hospitals providing early appointments.

Nearly half the general practitioners surveyed—47 per cent. of them—felt that there should be early abortion units, and I shall return to that point. A substantial proportion of them—67 per cent.—were concerned about pregnancy testing and similar issues. Those are real and serious difficulties in the Health Service. As I said earlier, one of the major motivations behind the new clause is to encourage the Health Service to re-examine its practices.

10.30 am

I am well aware that the 1967 Act embodies a conscience clause which permits certain Health Service employees to opt out. These days, there is a fondness for that expression on the Government Benches. In any event, I am concerned at the way in which that conscience clause can be used to militate against women who want or need an abortion. In certain areas there seems to be a preponderance of Health Service employees exercising their option to use the conscience clause. That fact is not advertised or publicly known, and a woman may be a long way into the system before she realises that it militates against the abortion she may need—not because she fails to comply with the terms of the 1967 Act, but because there is an in-built prejudice or conscience against abortion in the first place. I suppose that I am really saying that the law is not being observed and recognised.

New clause 3 will encourage general practitioners to look again at the conscience clause. If I had been given the time and the freedom to draft the amendments I wanted, I would have proposed a register of medical practitioners, which women could consult to identify those operating the conscience clause who held strong, and perfectly reasonable, beliefs against providing abortions. In that way, a woman would not be seeking the assistance of a practitioner whose beliefs entailed an in-built delay she could know nothing about. We must find a way of overcoming that problem, perhaps with the register I have mentioned. New clause 3 would provide a way out and a right of appeal.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): My hon. Friend mentioned that if he had been given the time he would have drafted an amendment providing for a conscience register. A brief examination of amendment No. 45, which has not been selected, suggests that it would have covered that proposal. If we return to this subject on a future occasion, perhaps we may bear such a register in mind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That must be done on another occasion and not now.

Ms. Richardson: That is what I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Doran: I have no intention of attempting to move such an amendment now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but obviously my hon. Friend and I are in agreement.

As a professional person, I know how difficult it is to entertain an appeal against one of my decisions. Solicitors do not tend to make decisions—they give advice. I know how nervous I am if any of my clients wishes to seek a second opinion. I suspect that members of the medical profession may feel intimidated by the suggestion of an appeal, because their decisions would be subject to examination by what I hope would be an independent appeals tribunal.

It is essential to look back over the 20 or more years of the Act's operation and consider the geographical disparities that the statistics reveal. Why is the number of abortions so much higher in one part of the country than in another? Why are there so many late abortions, with women having to turn to the private sector? Why cannot women obtain abortions that have been deemed necessary and that are within the law?

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) have any evidence of health authority officials deliberately causing delays and acting without any sense of urgency?

Mr. Doran: Even if I had such evidence, I would not attempt to present it here—I would look for another way. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) was, like myself, present when certain members of the Committee tabled a hit list—and I

certainly would not be prepared to go down that road. I am prepared to rest my argument on the statistics, which are very clear. It is more difficult for a woman to obtain an abortion in certain parts of the country than it is in others, and some are compelled to move out of the Health Service and into the private sector.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does my hon. Friend agree that he is not making any specific recommendations about the practical operation of the tribunal? We have all experienced hostile health authorities and their hostility towards tribunals. Such hostility might negate the good that a tribunal could do. It is an important issue for those of us who have suffered such experiences.

Mr. Doran: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. I deliberately did not go into detail because it would be far more than the House could cope with, given that we are dealing with an emotional topic. I am dealing now with the principle, and I leave to the Secretary of State the responsibility of drawing up the terms on which tribunals would operate.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I am concerned about my hon. Friend's response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), when my hon. Friend referred to the existence in Committee of a hit list. Would he care to explain more about that hit list and what it was intended to achieve?

Mr. Doran: I shall be happy to explain but the matter is recorded in the Committee proceedings. It was suggested that there was a large number of practitioners in the private sector who were abusing the system—I believe that they were called moral criminals by one member of the Committee. It was suggested that action should be taken against the 11 consultant gynaecologists whose names were given to the Committee. That matter caused the Committee and its Chairman great concern. Indeed, the Chairman, rightly, made his views well known. The hon. Member who made those remarks in Committee is in the Chamber and he may wish to comment later.

It is important to stress that new clause 3 deals with a matter of principle. If it is successful, it would be for the Secretary of State to draft the detail of how the appeals tribunals would operate. One such tribunal would be set up for each area health authority, and it is essential that appeals be heard speedily. I can think of a number of examples of the way in which tribunals might operate, but the one that most comes to mind is the children's hearing system in Scotland, embodying the concept of what is known as the first lawful day hearing. When a child is, for example, taken into custody for committing a serious offence, or has been the subject of abuse or parental neglect and is taken into care, there is a hearing within seven days—but preferably on the first lawful day, which is usually the day after the child is taken into custody or care. Speed is essential.

There would also need to be a medical element in the membership of the tribunal, in order properly to assess the evidence put before it. Funding would be the responsibility of the local health board.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Can my hon. Friend say whether the tribunal's operation would allow for the Bill's current time limit of 18 weeks? If a tribunal agreed to a delay, would that be deemed an exceptional circumstance, allowing for termination after the 18th week?

Mr. Doran: I trust that the rules for the tribunal would provide that where application has been made to a doctor, that would be the starting point, on the understanding that the woman qualified under all the other terms of the Act, but that does not detract from the necessity for speed. The whole House wishes to see a reduction in the number of late abortions, which are traumatic for the woman, for the staff and for everyone else involved, and it is disappointing that the Bill makes no attempt to deal with the problems that I have described in the Health Service. In Committee, many of the Bill's sponsors made lengthy attacks on the private sectors, which they would not have made in other contexts. Many of the issues raised by opponents of the Bill were dismissed out of hand, with a few grudging amendments which, if anything, make the Bill worse.

We witnessed in Committee from the sponsors of the Bill, and no doubt we will see again today, not a commitment to the system envisaged in the Bill but merely the first stage in a campaign to remove from the statute book the right to abortion. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) made that clear in Committee. To paraphrase his position, he said that it had taken 40 years to abolish slavery and that it might take 20 years to abolish abortionism, but that that was the intention. That clear and emphatic statement shows that there is no real commitment to the Bill. It is merely the first stage and its supporters will be back again and again until the right to abortion is removed altogether. Anyone considering voting for the Bill in its present form should bear that in mind.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): The abolition of abortion or the repeal of the 1967 Act could occur only with the will of the House, so why is the hon. Gentleman getting his knickers in a twist?

Mr. Doran: I was not aware that they were in a twist. I was trying to make a serious point. The Bill purports to reduce the time limit while accepting the concept of abortion, but the sponsors do not believe in that concept. They are philosophically and ideologically opposed to it. That has been made clear in every statement that they have made and in every tactic that they have used against those of us who oppose the Bill. The House should be clear that those who support the Bill do not want an improvement in the system. They are not prepared to consider improvements in the Health Service——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying into a Second Reading debate. He must address himself to the new clause.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is difficult for my hon. Friend to remain within the bounds of order that you have described while developing his reply to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith). This is a debating Chamber and you have to sit there and listen. If a valid debating point is made, my hon. Friend or, indeed, any other hon. Member must be able to respond to it. Some hon. Members may not be clear about what is meant by getting one's knickers in a twist, so it is necessary for my hon. Friend to deal with that. I hope he will expand on the

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point. I should like to know what the hon. Member for Rochdale meant. Perhaps my hon. Friend knows. Perhaps you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's help, but perhaps he will leave this to me.

Mr. Doran: As ever, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I shall try not to stray out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The new clause is a sensible measure designed to deal with defects in the Bill and to provide some flexibility. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You and the House will know that I am not one to raise frivolous points of order or to waste the time of the House. When you came into the Chamber I was in the middle of making a point of order to Mr. Speaker about the deep unfairness of the way in which precedents have been changed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already raised that point with Mr. Speaker. In my hearing, a clear ruling was given. There is nothing that I can add to it now.

10.45 am

Mr. Wells: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to waste time. I was not able to finish my point of order to Mr. Speaker. That is why I am raising it with you. If we had known Mr. Speaker's ruling about precedence, we should have put down a 24-week limit at the outset. Voting would then have taken place in strict order, downwards from 28 weeks, and we should have reached the Division on that issue before we ever reached 22 or 20 weeks. It is vital that people within and outside the House understand that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. There is nothing that I can add to Mr. Speaker's ruling.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have heard the frustrated cry from the other side. The hon. Gentleman tried to make that point earlier, and no doubt you heard part of what was said. The list of amendments is known as Mr. Speaker's "provisional" selection, which means that there is an opportunity to change it, an opportunity that is taken on some occasions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct, but Mr. Speaker said distinctly that he did not intend to change his selection of amendments. That is the conclusive answer to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): It may be for the convenience of the House if I do not dwell on new clause 3, introduced by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), but concentrate on amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42 in my name and in the names of right hon. and hon. Members from almost every political party in the House.

In my view, new clause 3 is confused. I hope that I am not being uncharacteristically offensive when I say that it looked as though it has been written out on the back of a cigarette packet on the shuttle to London from Aberdeen. I shall urge my hon. Friends to vote against the new clause because it muddies the water and will be of no benefit to anyone concerned with this important issue.

My three amendments were tabled for one specific purpose. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir. B. Braine) successfully introduced a series of amendments in Committee which in my view, and that of those who put their names to my amendments, were deeply unsatisfactory. I hope that my right hon. Friend, for whom I and the whole House have great respect, will not consider it unduly insulting if I suggest that his amendments were wrecking amendments. My right hon. Friend is a seasoned and successful campaigner on many issues. The stand that he has always taken on abortion is well known. He opposes it in principle, and I respect his view. I submit that my right hon. Friend and those hon. Members who supported him in Committee passed that series of the amendments with only one purpose—further to wreck the original Abortion Act that was passed about 20 years ago.

The Committee made it clear that certification for an abortion could be signed only by medical practitioners or gynaecologists who work in the National Health Service. That is a gross insult to the many professional men and women who are members of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and who practise in the private sector. The Committee is saying that it does not trust those professional people and that they are charlatans.

One member of the Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), went further. He said that he had a hit list; he had the names of clinics and qualified gynaecologists and obstetricians who were breaking the law. If that is correct, this is the right place and time for my hon. Friend to give us the names. I want the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute those people. They are giving a bad name to the medical profession. They are committing an offence. If I had such evidence, I would immediately give those names to the House today and pass them to the Director of Public Prosecutions. But if I did not have evidence, I would not have been so foolish or irresponsible as to raise those red herrings in Committee, and then be unable to give the names of the clinics and the people involved.

I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham is irresponsible or would in any way wish to deceive the House. This is therefore an ideal opportunity, while he is in his place, with substantial files in front of him —which no doubt will include that hit list—for him to stand up with the privilege of the House and give the names of the clinics and the doctors involved. If my hon. Friend would do so, I guarantee to write tomorrow to the Director of Public Prosecutions informing him of the remarks made in the House and of the list of names, and asking him to investigate the matter with a view to prosecution.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be an abuse of the privileges of this House to make accusations against individuals inside this House which, if he did not believe them, the hon. Member would not be prepared to make outside the House?

Mr. MacKay: I agree with my hon. Friend. We have seen many examples—mainly from the Opposition—of the irresponsible naming of people without evidence. I

conclude from the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has not sought to intervene that he is not sure of his facts. He is not prepared to name those clinics and people because he does not think that the allegation will stand up when submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions. We can only conclude from the silence that it was an irresponsible remark made by my hon. Friend in Committee. It would be best for the House and the Committee if he withdrew that remark.

Mr. Frank Cook: Will the hon. Member consider an extension of the point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham)? Is it not an even greater abuse of the privileges of the House to refer to the existence of a number of people and not be prepared to substantiate the allegation?

Mr. MacKay: I would, but I think that we have dwelt long enough on this matter. I want to move now to other parts of my amendment.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Many Conservative Members are surprised that the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) has not availed himself of this opportunity, because it is of such crucial importance.

Mr. MacKay: I cannot speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham. All that I have done—out of common decency—is to give him the opportunity to present his case, which is his right. That he has declined to do.

Mrs. Gorman: My hon. Friend is aware that I was a member of the Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) also produced in Committee what he alleged to be a tape recording of a conversation between one of those gynaecologists and a young woman. The gynaecologist deliberately persuaded the young woman, against her better judgment, to part with £450 to have an abortion which she did not want. The young woman had previously been counselled by Life or another such organisation. My hon. Friend refused to produce that tape, or a transcript of it. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham confirm who is mentioned in that tape?

Mr. MacKay: I am not responsible for my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham. If he wishes to pass that tape to anybody, no doubt he will do so. The House has noted that, in Committee, he said that he had not only a list of names, but a tape recording.

I refer now to the amendments introduced in Committee by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. Of all people, Conservative Members should support the private sector of medicine. We believe in the National Health Service, but we believe also in the right of men and women to avail themselves of private medicine if they want it. If the amendments passed in Committee are sustained by the House today, many millions of women who use the private sector rather than the National Health Service for medical needs will have to seek advice from general practitioners and gynaecologists in the National Health Service. Imagine the pressure that that will put upon National Health Service hospitals. Imagine the pressure that it will put on gynaecological units. All hon. Members are worried about waiting lists in our hospitals. This will extend the waiting list. Ministers on the Treasury Bench, who are listening carefully to this debate, will be filled with horror at the idea that they will have to cope with a large number of people in NHS hospitals who would normally use the private sector. I hope that we shall reject this part of the Bill and that Conservative Members will support the private sector of medicine and the right of patients to decide whether they want to be treated in the private sector or in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that many Opposition Members would be reluctant to defend the private sector and nervous of accusations of profit-making. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is more significant when an hon. Member like me says that there is no evidence of excessive fee-charging in the abortion sector? That is contrary to the slanders which are sometimes made about fees in the private sector. I have a duty to defend doctors who, although they practise in the private sector, are not charging unwarranted fees for abortions——

Mr. Cyril Smith: Absolute rubbish.

Mrs. Wise: I am trying to be brief. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is more convincing for me to defend doctors in that sense than it is for him?

Mr. MacKay: I concede that point. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) is not noted for being a friend of capitalism. The hon. Lady and I disagree on almost every fundamental issue that comes before the House. I would have expected the amendment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point to have been moved by Left-wing Socialists who are doctrinarily opposed to the private sector of medicine, not by a robust supporter such as him.

Mrs. Gorman: My hon. Friend will be interested to know that the eminent gynaecologist, Dr. Wendy Savage, who is observing our proceedings today, and who is not normally a friend of the policies embraced by Conservative Members on private enterprise, has informed me that not only is the private sector doing a useful job but that the skill of the private sector is greater than that in the NHS. The death rate is less than that in the National Health Service by a factor of 10. That information is published in the *British Medical Journal* by Dr. Peter Diggory FR COG——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough for an intervention.

Mr. MacKay: It would be unwise of me and unfair to the House to pursue that point, which I suspect is not quite relevant to the issue we are discussing.

I have established beyond reasonable doubt that great pressure would be put on NHS hospitals and gynaecological units if the Bill were passed as amended in Committee.

11 am

There is another even more sinister aspect of the amendment passed in Committee. Let us imagine a woman living in a remote part of the country where there are few NHS gynaecologists and the distance to the nearest NHS hospital is considerable. If the nearest gynaecologist is fundamentally and morally opposed to abortion, she is stymied. The doctor will not sign the certificate. So there will be one rule for my constituents in Thames Valley, where there are plenty of hospitals and enlightened gynaecologists, and another for people living in remote parts of the United Kingdom, who might have the

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misfortune to find that the only NHS gynaecologist in the region would never sign a certificate. That is why the private sector must be included.

There is another sinister feature. Let us take the case of a woman in a private sector hospital who is taken seriously ill while pregnant and needs to have an abortion. As the Bill is now drafted, that can only take place in a public hospital or approved place—a clinic that has been licensed in the private sector by the DHSS. The woman does not want an abortion; she is in a private sector hospital because she is a member of BUPA. The specialist dealing with her case says that she will lose her life if she does not have an abortion, but, as the law stands, he cannot perform that abortion in the hospital or clinic because it is not within the NHS and is not registered to perform abortions. Therefore, the woman will have to be driven in an ambulance some considerable distance to another hospital or clinic where two doctors or gynaecologists will have to certify that it is right that she should have an abortion. Only then will it be performed there. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) loves intervening from a sedentary position. We rarely see hom in the House. It is a pity that he cannot intervene more properly in the debate. We look forward to hearing him later.

Ms. Gordon: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in the circumstances he has described, and especially during a holiday period when it might be difficult to obtain a certificate from a consultant gynaecologist, a doctor in a private clinic might find himself faced with a choice between breaking the law and becoming a criminal or letting a patient die?

Mr. MacKay: I agree entirely with that telling intervention. We can think of other examples—foul weather, a snow storm, roads closed, and still a doctor would be breaking the law and committing a criminal offence if he carried out an abortion to save a woman's life, because he could not transfer her by ambulance to another hospital.

If the Bill proceeds today unamended, innocent women in this country will lose their lives because of the amendment passed in Committee. I have conclusively argued that any gynaecologist, wherever he happens to practise, should be able to certify. The amendment was nothing but a wrecking amendment to make abortion harder to obtain. It will do great damage to the NHS and make our constituents wait longer for gynaecological services—and it could lead to loss of life. I urge the House to support amendments Nos. 40, 41 and 42.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I have heard the arguments of the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and I know that the House wants to make progress on this group of amendments, although the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) made an eloquent case in Committee. In ideal circumstances I would happily have supported the amendment moved there. I spoke last night to my right hon. and hon. Friends who are fellow sponsors of the Bill and we believe that the amendments would go some way to meeting some of the criticisms put by the hon. Member for Berkshire, East and other hon. Members in Committee. So I recommend that the House accept them.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) moved a new clause whose wording was defective in a number of respects. For instance, one would have to assume that the area health board that he referred to—it is a Scottish institution—would have its powers derogated to regional and area health authorities in England and Wales. Some of the other wording was also defective. There was, for example, no definition of "delay". I spoke to officers at the DHSS last night and have many misgivings about this. The issue could properly be re-examined in another place if there was a case to be made, but I do not think that it was made adequately this morning. The new clause could add to bureaucracy and cause as many problems as it attempts to solve. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South had the chances to raise the point in Committee but was unable to do so, but there will be a chance for these issues to be considered further in another place.

The subject of private clinics is regularly raised. I must remind the House that profit is involved. Although it may be dressed up as a surplus, we must remember that only 11 doctors and the clinics in which they work performed about 60 per cent. of all late abortions. For that they took £2 million.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: I may be able to pre-empt the hon. Lady if she is about to say that this is because of the NHS. I remind the House that more than half of late abortions are not carried out on people from our country, so NHS delays can hardly be the reason.

Ms. Short: Many medical staff in Birmingham share my ethnic background—they are Irish Catholic immigrants—and the abortion law on the statute book is consequently not available to women there, which is gravely wrong. That means that only women who can raise the money go into the charitable private sector.

What is the Government's view? Is it that the Birmingham practice should change and there should be planning within the NHS to extend to all women the right that they have in theory under the law, or does he just want to stop people having abortions? Is that his game?

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady is wrong to suggest that any games are being played. In Committee, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) put an alternative view. She said that facilities were available throughout the city of Birmingham. We live in a country that allows 600 abortions every working day and 172,000 every year, and the door that my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) said 20 years ago would never be left wide open has led to abortion on demand.

If hon. Members disagree with that, perhaps they will accept the view of consultant gynaecologists, 700 of whom answered a Gallup survey; 60 per cent. of them said that, in their view, abortion on demand was available in this country.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will my hon. Friend confirm that he accepts the principle of equal provision within the law?

Mr. Alton: Of course I confirm that, and I am grateful for that helpful intervention.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: I shall give way in a moment. I am grateful for the interest that hon. Members are taking in the Bill, but I hope that they will allow me to make a little more progress. We should challenge the assumption that in itself abortion is a desirable operation. We should seek radical alternatives to the defeatism that abortion represents.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Would the hon. Gentleman accept from those of us who have looked at the statistics about Birmingham that if there were equal provision in the law, which he has said that he would accept, it would mean an increase in abortions in the Birmingham area? Is he suggesting that people are carrying out abortions that do not meet the strict criteria laid down in the 1967 Act? That is what he suggests when he says that there is abortion on demand. The law does not permit abortion on demand.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady knows as well as I do that the 35 people who run the private counselling clinics and agencies also run abortion clinics. That financial link should be broken. It is a scandal that people can make money out of advising people to have an abortion. I have had many thousands of letters from people who say that if they had known about the psychological and physical consequences of abortion they would have done otherwise.

Abortion carries consequences for everybody involved —for the doctors and nurses and for the women and children. A 30-bed clinic was at the heart of a Department of Health and Social Security investigation in 1985 after one of its clients, a 21-year-old Spanish student, bled to death when her abortion went wrong. That clinic charges up to £385 a time, and the later the abortion the more people pay. A report called "The Charter of Tears" in The *Sunday Mirror* said:

"One 18-year-old girl described the clinic as 'a production line'. She said: 'Everybody was in a terrible rush.' Another girl said: 'I had my operation at 11 am and I was out by 2 pm.'"

To try to pretend that this is love, care or support for the woman or for the child is a travesty of the truth. All that abortion involves is violence and death. On that note I urge the House to accept the amendments in the spirit in which they were moved by the hon. Member for Berkshire, East and to reject the new clause of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): In view of what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has said, it might be helful it I were now to intervene briefly to assist the House as far as I can. I shall be brief because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak and that the House wishes to make progress. As far as is possible in speaking about this matter I shall be factual. As I said on Second Reading, I see my task as the Minister for Health to assist the House in making up its mind and not to express a view on behalf of the Government.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has said that he is minded to accept the amendments moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay). There is relatively little by way of factual information or further comment that I can give to assist the House about those amendments. The advice given to me is that if the amendments are accepted abortion in the private sector in and after the 18th week would need to be advised by a member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and to be certified by two registered medical practitioners, as at present. In practice, one of those would almost always be a member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists who had advised in terms of the first half of the proposition. That is very little different from the existing position, since one of the two doctors currently certifying abortions over 18 weeks has almost always been admitted as a member of the royal college. I see no particular difficulties about the acceptance of those amendments.

Ms. Short: Private clinics and uneven provision around the country cause many late abortions, as I am sure the Minister knows. Those of us who are concerned about late abortions—unlike the promoter of the Bill—think that it is crucial for the National Health Service to be required to plan its abortion provision within the law throughout the country. If that were done enormous numbers of late abortions would be avoided. Will the Minister look seriously at that and at the prospect of making that change so that we can prevent the distress of late abortion? He could achieve that.

11.15 am

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady is bringing us to the underlying purpose, as I understand it, of new clause 3 which was moved by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) and to which I was about to turn. I start by acknowledging the feelings expressed that there may well be some variation in the attitudes of those concerned with these matters in different parts of the country. As I said on Second Reading, it is easier to note that problem than to see what can readily be done about it unless we go down the path of making appointments to gynaecological posts throughout the country dependent upon an interrogation of the potential appointee in order to ascertain his views about abortion. That would be to set up some kind of quota system for those who were "pro-abortion" or "anti-abortion" to be appointed in particular localities. The House will see that that proposition is fraught with very great difficulty.

While acknowledging the problem, I am not able to respond in quite the way that the hon. Lady would like by giving an easy answer along the lines that she has suggested. I am sure that the House would not wish me to take a great deal of time. For that reason I intend to restrict the number of interventions that I accept. However, I shall again give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms. Short: My point is extremely important and has nothing to do with time wasting. I am second to none in defending the right of people to stand on conscience, but that right cannot prevent the proper implementation of the law throughout the country. We can stand firmly by the right of all medical staff to obey their conscience on abortion, but can also impose on the National Health Service a duty to plan proper abortion facilities within the law in all areas. Surely that is possible. I appeal to the Minister to plan for it because it would prevent late abortions and do far more than this dishonest Bill.

Mr. Newton: Once again I appreciate the hon. Lady's sincerity, but I do not think that there is a great deal that I can add to what I have said about what I perceive to be the difficulties of going down the track that appears to be implied by the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Wise: If the Minister looks at the record he will find that at one stage his Department gave exactly that kind of advice: that each area should make sure that it appointed a sufficient number of people who were not subject to conscientious bar so that facilities could be available throughout the country. If he looks back he will find that that was done. I suggest that it is quite proper and in no sense a hostile interrogation. It is simply to ensure that bars will not be placed in the way of an adequate National Health Service in every area.

Mr. Newton: My understanding is different from that of the hon. Lady. However, I shall check it in the light of what she has said. I do not resile from my view that it would be wrong if people seeking gynaecological and obstetric appointments in hospitals all over Britain had to depend for appointment on the declaration of a specific view. That would be an extremely uneasy situation for health authorities, for Ministers and for the House.

New clause 3 would introduce a formal appeal mechanism into the Abortion Act 1967 as a whole. It would not, of course, simply apply to applications for abortions over 18 weeks which are, generally, the abortions dealt with in the Bill.

Every scrap of advice that I have, which I will not set out at length, says that the new clause is technically defective—for example, in its terminology, which refers to area health boards, which are bodies not currently known to the law. It is technically defective in a number of other respects on which I could elaborate. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has already touched on a particular difficulty, which is the reference to "any delay", with no definition of "delay". A delay could mean, in theory, a delay of a matter of minutes and, without some definition—a definition that would be extremely difficult to achieve in a workable form —the clause would be inoperable.

Therefore, I have to tell the House as clearly as I can that were it to take the view that the new clause represented a principle to which it wished to agree, substantial further work would be required in the other place to put the clause into a form in which there would be any chance of its working. I have some other serious reservations, which I should set out for the House.

In moving his new clause, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South said that he acknowledged that there should be medical representation on these tribunals, but that there should also be a lay element. It occurs to me, and will no doubt have occurred to the House, that quite a number of the decisions that would in theory be appealed against under this proposal would be clinical decisions, at least in the mind of the doctor who made them, and in terms of the law. It is open to question what the response of the profession would be, as its members would see many difficulties where clinical decisions or decisions taken on a clinical basis were subject to review by a group that was not made up of clinicians. That would raise the question whether the decisions by such a body could or would be implemented by a clinician who would have carry out the abortion.

It is clear that nothing that a termination appeals tribunal could decide could compel the clinician to carry out an abortion against his wishes or judgment. I see the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) shaking his head. I am making these points only to illustrate some of the difficulties that would be entailed in developing this new clause into something that would be sustainable. I am not saying that I am convinced that those difficulties are not surmountable. I am saying that there has been little time for us, quite apart from the House, to consider them, but they appear to me to be formidable, and would undoubtedly introduce a new element of difficulty and complexity into the changes of law that are being proposed.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The right hon. Gentleman has said that there might be a possibility of the tribunal coming out in favour of the applicant, but the applicant then having difficulty in finding a clinician to carry out the recommendation of the tribunal. That suggests that the clinicians have a veto on the rights of the individual that have been upheld by the tribunal. Surely, whether the wording is correct or not, we should be finding a way to sustain the rights of the individual rather than providing mechanisms for vetos.

Mr. Newton: I have already recognised the importance of that point, and I hope that my remarks will not be considered by the hon. Gentleman or others who may support the new clause as being made in a negative spirit. They are designed simply to reveal the difficulties of going down the track that has been suggested and the undoubted need for further substantial thought, not only in drafting but about many of the concepts involved. I am perhaps saying no more to the House than this: in a matter that is already fraught with difficulty and complexity, the House will need to consider whether it wishes to introduce this additional and substantially fresh element to the subject matter of the Bill. In the end, that judgment is for the House, not me to make, but it is important that I should make clear to the House the technical difficulties that I envisage and the difficulties that there would be in developing a clause in line with new clause 3.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: No, I wish to conclude. Beyond that, the issue of principle involved is one for the House to decide on and not one for me to tell the House what it should decide.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I must refute some of the allegations made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), particularly those he has made in his many attacks, both in Committee and in the House, on the private sector. I do not normally defend the private sector, as my hon. Friends know, but as a former trustee of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, which is involved in 30,000 abortions a year, I must refute the allegation that the directors of charitable private organisations such as BPAS who do a great service for women in carrying out abortions that are not available under the NHS, are paid for their work. We volunteer for that work because we think that it is essential.

From the time of the reform of the abortion law in 1967, the NHS has been unable to organise itself to cope with the need for legal and safe abortion. As a result, waiting lists have developed and, as a former member of a regional hospital board, I know full well that in my area, because of the attitude of the consultant gynaecologist and obstetrician at the University hospital of Wales, we were unable, although we were responsible for the running of the NHS in that part of Wales, to implement a day care clinic. Therefore, women in that area were unable to have

swift and safe abortions and were forced to travel long distances outside the area to obtain abortions. That consultant gynaecologist prevailed on other gynaecologists and obstetricians in his department to take a similar attitude.

Mrs. Gorman: On the point about safety, and in support of charities such as the BPAS, may I ask whether the hon. Lady is aware that charities have the safest of all records in assisting people with abortions, and that in the 20 years since the Abortion Act 1967 was passed there has been only one death out of the 600,000 cases with which they have dealt? That must be one of the most outstanding safety records.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important point. It shows how responsible and careful these charities are. She has also reminded me that one general practitioner and one consultant gynaecologist authorise abortions, and the rule in the BPAS is that the consultant gynaecologist never authorises the termination because we want to prevent the gynaecologist who is performing the abortion from profiting from his decisions. To require an NHS consultant to certify for late abortions would affect women who go to those charitable organisations.

If terminations were freely available on the NHS, there would be a different argument again, but there is no mechanism—as I am sure hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree—within the NHS to ensure that an adequate service is provided for all women who need it. Despite the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the NHS in 1979, of which I was a member, and in which I participated closely, particularly on these discussions, it was recommended that in all hospital regions 75 per cent. of terminations should be carried out within the NHS and that facilities should be made available. My hon. Friends will know that today less than half of terminations carried out in Britain are carried out under the NHS.

In its report on late abortions in England and Wales, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists stated that one fifth of women who have abortions in the NHS between 20 and 23 weeks were medically referred by 12 weeks. The college concluded:

"The abortion services contribute to avoidable delays."

Thus many women decide to go into the private sector, where abortions do not have to take their place among a host of other operations. They are carried out without the dangerous and distressing delays that take place in the NHS.

11.30 am

Ms. Short: A few moments ago my hon. Friend said that she wished to correct the wrong impression given by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). I am sure that it was only accidentally that he gave the House a false impression this morning. He said that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) contested in Committee my claim that a proper abortion service on the NHS was not available in Birmingham. In central Birmingham, 6 per cent. of abortions take place in the NHS. Without the charitable sector, women in Birmingham are not entitled to that which the law provides. I am sure that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill would not like the false impression that he gave to remain on the record.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important intervention. The percentage to which she referred is abysmally low and illustrates the patchy provision that is made for women throughout Britain. The NHS service depends greatly on the area in which one lives.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): As a former chairman of the Central Birmingham health authority, I think that I am right in saying that, wherever the abortions were performed, a large proportion of them were paid for by the NHS.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank the Minister for making that point. It shows the faith that the NHS has in the provision that is made by the charitable sector. It is prepared to pay for terminations that it cannot carry out itself. It is a tribute to the work that is done by the private sector.

There are some positive reasons for preferring the non-NHS sector, including greater privacy and availability of intensive counselling. It is insulting to suggest that the private sector is not concerned about counselling both before and after a termination. That was an important part of the work of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. I say to the hon. Member for Mossley Hill that it is insulting to the private sector to suggest that it does not take great account of counselling both before and after termination.

It is a tribute to the quality of service that is provided by the charitable sector that several health authorities use its clinics on an agency basis. In 1986, the last year for which we have figures, about 7,000 abortions were provided in that way. The private and charitable sector is tightly controlled by the DHSS in all aspects of its work, including prices. The pregnancy advisory services carry out abortions for between £280 and £300. High staff-patient ratios and extensive resuscitation and other equipment demanded by the DHSS mean that the actual cost of late abortions is much higher than the sum which is charged for them. Late abortions that are carried out by abortion charities are subsidised by other operations. The cost of an early abortion is about £150 to £200. That is also the average cost in the NHS.

I resent the remarks of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill that gave a distorted impression of current British abortion legislation. In fact, it is one of the least liberal pieces of legislation to be found in Europe. Eight to 10 western European countries allow abortion on request during the first 12 weeks or more. Most of these countries permit abortion on specific grounds after that limit, usually for medical conditions, foetal handicap or social and psychological reasons. Such abortions are available up to 24 weeks.

We believe that the best way to reduce late abortions is by improving the availability and acceptability of the NHS abortion services, increasing contraceptive provision for young people, offering realistic sex and family life education in schools and developing more sensitive techniques for the diagnosis of foetal abnormality. However, there will always be a need for abortion late in pregnancy for a minority of women. I stress that it is only a minority. It is vital that choice is retained. That is why we oppose the Bill in its entirety. I oppose new clause 3.

[Mrs. Clwyd]

The Bill was not changed fundamentally in Committee and it still restricts the availability of legal abortions to the first 17 weeks of pregnancy.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I listened carefully to what the hon. Lady said about the charities that perform abortions. Does she agree that we must not confuse the charities with the private clinics, which carry out a large proportion of the very late abortions that are carried out on foreign women? Perhaps we should take to heart what she has said about the NHS system, but could we not convince other countries that they should put their houses in order? If that were done, Britain would not be the foetal dustbin of Europe.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank the hon. Lady for making that point. It was discussed in some detail in Committee. There was an element of xenophobia in the arguments advanced by certain hon. Members in Committee when they talked about "foreign women", as though they were a group to be denigrated. The term "foreign women" includes women from Northern Ireland—perhaps the hon. Lady was not aware of that.

Mrs. Peacock: Yes, I was.

Mrs. Clwyd: The needs of women in the United Kingdom includes those of women in Northern Ireland. I am sure that the hon. Lady would not wish to deny those women the opportunity of obtaining an abortion in Britain, bearing in mind the particular difficulties within their own country. It is important to keep "foreign women" in perspective and not to use the term in the xenophobic way that some Conservative Members adopted so frequently in Committee.

Mrs. Wise: I agree completely with the factors to which my hon. Friend referred that would reduce the number of late abortions and abortions in general. Does she agree that she should add to the list social factors such as homelessness and poverty, which cause desperation among women? Improving social factors would be an excellent and constructive way of reducing desperation which leads to abortion.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important observation.

Those who are most concerned about reducing late abortions seem not to share the same concern for the conditions in which many of the women who seek late abortions have to live. As they are responsible for much of the legislation that will make it even more difficult for women who already live in poverty, bad housing, poor social conditions and in families where unemployment is high, they should realise that there is an element of hypocrisy in some of their arguments. If they were as vociferous on the need for improving social conditions as they are on reducing late abortions, I am sure that we would all approve and support them in their attempts to improve conditions.

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Lady has raised a crucial issue. The Bill came out of Committee largely unchanged. On Second Reading the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) said that it was not his intention to be intransigent—*[Interruption.]* He was intransigent in Committee. On Second Reading however, he said:

"if I do not keep my word . . . hon. Members will have the chance to vote against the Bill on Report"—[*Official Report*, 22 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 1240.]

Would the hon. Lady care to comment on that?

Mrs. Clwyd: The Bill has not been fundamentally changed. If the Bill had been amended in Committee in a helpful way, we would be having a different debate today. Indeed, the amendments that were accepted in Committee will make the Bill even more difficult to implement.

Mrs. Gorman: The statistics of foreign women having abortions also includes women from Scotland and, of course, from Eire—they are technically foreign, but they are allowed to vote in this country. There are a large number of such women. Incidentally, none of our amendments against the Bill was accepted.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Lady has raised an important point. The two limited exceptions that were made in the Bill relate to abortions on the ground of specified foetal handicap or rape or incest committed against girls under 18. In Committee we said that those exceptions were hedged with bureaucracy. They cater for a small proportion of abortions that are carried out after 17 weeks.

Evidence given to the House of Lords Select Committee on infant life preservation shows that women who have abortions at this late stage of pregnancy

"usually do so for very pressing reasons."

Under the terms of the Bill as it now stands, and because our amendments were not accepted, legal abortions will no longer be available for such women.

Although the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and his supporters would argue that they have made major concessions, we consider them to be minor. Indeed, the hon. Member said that he even found some of the concessions repugnant. He said that he felt compelled to put them forward

"only for the reasons of political expediency".

We appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is anxious to get the Bill through the House, but even the minor concessions were made for the most cynical of reasons. I stress the fact that in the final hours of the Committee the hon. Gentleman stated:

"Although we shall not win all the arguments on the matter this time. . . . I shall want to return to them in years to come. We shall continue to challenge this aspect and I want to put down a marker about that now."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 30 March 1988; c. 271.]

He made his intentions quite clear. After the first debate on this issue, perhaps some of us were under the illusion that he was prepared to be much more lenient in his approach to the Bill. That notion was disabused in Committee.

Mrs. Mahon: With regard to foreign women, may I say that it caused great offence to many people who contacted me that it was possible to speak in such a dehumanising way about women who were simply women in need. If the Bill is passed, our women will become someone else's foreign women. I believe that that description was one of the more offensive tactics that was used by those supporting the Bill.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information.

When I was a Member of the European Parliament and attended a meeting of the Socialist group in Dublin, I caused considerable offence to some of my fellow Socialists because I looked at the election manifesto of the Irish

Socialist party and discovered that there was no provision for dealing with women who required terminations. I am conscious of the pressing need of those women who are denied terminations within their own country. Our system is not the most liberal within Western Europe—it is the least liberal in comparison to eight other countries—but we should be pleased about the help that we offer to women in need; we should not denigrate that.

11.45 am

I oppose new clause 3. I am sorry that I have to oppose my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran). I believe that the problems that have been caused as a result of the amendments accepted in Committee are pertinent to the provisions of that clause and we need a number of answers.

The clause creates an appeals tribunal procedure for women who are either refused an abortion under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967 or when there has been a delay in reaching a decision on whether a woman has grounds for an abortion. It appears that the new clause seeks to tackle the problem of delays for women seeking termination by creating a new right of appeal. The proposed provisions, however, are inadequate and ineffective.

One of the amendments accepted in Committee allows girls who are under 18 a termination after 17 weeks if they have been victims of rape or incest, but not for girls who are a day over 18. That was the effect of the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). How would new clause 3 affect that? This matter could have been debated if our amendments Nos. 12 and 13 had been selected. The fact that they have not been selected has caused many of us great distress.

The Bill's provisions will create enormous difficulties for doctors. We hotly debated this issue in Committee. Is the hon. Member for Mossley Hill suggesting that rape or incest becomes less traumatic once a woman has had her 18th birthday? If something is not desirable at the age of 18 or under, why should 18 and one day, 19, 20 or 21 be acceptable? Surely women who are victims of rape and incest have an equal right to terminate the pregnancy if they so wish.

Mr. Alton: Will the hon. Lady confirm that, as recorded by the DHSS, no abortion was performed on the grounds of rape or incest on an over-aged woman?

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister made the position clear in Committee. The DHSS does not require the recording of such facts. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill is well aware of that because the Minister explained it to him in Committee.

We were not able to hear the arguments from the hon. Member for Mossley Hill in Committee on abortions for women aged over 18. It is ridiculous for the proponents of the Bill to argue that victims of rape and incest aged 18 or under should be able to have a late abortion while those over 18 should not. That is completely ludicrous. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Mossley Hill was not prepared to answer that in Committee.

There are legal and medical difficulties for a doctor in assessing whether a woman has been raped.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Before the hon. Lady leaves the point about rape, will she explain or interpret the amendment that was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and accepted in Committee about how rape can be proved? Does the hon. Lady believe that entirely by mistake my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone has given us a terrific let-out clause almost for abortion on demand? It would appear that any woman can claim that she has been raped and have an abortion if she is under 18. That is surely not what my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone intended. I can tell by the look on my hon. Friend's face that that is not what she intended. Perhaps she will intervene shortly. Knowing how lucid the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is, I suspect that she will be able to answer that question amicably for me.

Mrs. Clwyd: Exactly. My hon. Friend has made an important point. Who will judge the case when a woman claims that she has been raped or has been the victim of incest? Will the termination appeals procedure judge that case, as suggested in new clause 3? We are worried about that.

Will there be false allegations of rape from a young woman desperate for an abortion? Will doctors become suspicious of anyone claiming to have been raped who does not request a termination until late in pregnancy? Should those be matters for appeal through the procedures spelt out in new clause 3? It is important that we receive answers to those questions.

In 1967, the original Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill included rape as one of the grounds for abortion. However, that was subsequently removed because it was argued that it placed doctors in an invidious position. The amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) would place doctors in a similar position. Doctors would be able to make a decision only on a woman's mental or physical state. It was considered appropriate to deal with such difficult cases under the mental health provisions. I suggest that the Mental Health Act 1983 has worked well in that respect because it has given doctors sufficient flexibility to deal with difficult circumstances.

I remind the House that the Select Committee reporting on the Infant Life (Preservation) Bill stated:

> "The Committee would not wish to see any impediment placed in the way of the victim of rape and incest who is desirous of terminating her pregancy."

That highlights the problems with the Abortion (Amendment) Bill as it stands, as it removes the flexibility of the law to deal with those distressing cases. That is one reason why I must oppose new clause 3.

It is the intention of new clause 3 to ensure that a woman who is unreasonably delayed by administrative or other factors can receive an abortion after the time limit at the beginning of the 18th week. If that is the intention, it is not made sufficiently clear, and new clause 3 fails to achieve that objective. As the new clause is drafted, it does not permit an abortion to be performed after the beginning of the 18th week, even if the appeals tribunal finds in the woman's favour and agrees that she has been delayed unnecessarily. A victim of rape or incest may find herself in that position.

New clause 3 is an enabling provision which grants the Secretary of State for Social Services the power to set up the tribunal. However, it gives no specification of the tribunal's nature or powers. That means that the detail of how the tribunal would operate would not be open to debate in the House. The new clause contains no provision for any regulations drawn up by the Secretary of State to

[Mrs. Clwyd]

be brought before the House as a statutory instrument which would be subject to annulment by resolution of either House, and important points of principle would therefore be determined by the Secretary of State without the opportunity to challenge them.

Ms. Short: We all agree that the drafting of the clause is unsatisfactory and needs improvement. What we need to discuss is the principle of the right of appeal. If that is supported in the House, as I hope that it will be, we will ask the other place to tidy it up and improve it.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point, which I agree is very important. These issues are of considerable significance, and cannot be left to secondary legislation which Parliament may not have an opportunity to discuss.

The new clause does not specify the powers that the tribunal would have. Could it require the abortion to be carried out if it upheld the woman's appeal? If so, what sanction would it have if a medical practitioner refused to carry out the operation? What powers would it have if it found in a woman's favour after the beginning of the 18th week? Would it have powers to compensate a woman who had been delayed beyond the statutory time limit and had to continue her pregnancy, although she had grounds for an abortion under the 1967 Act?

The new clause does not specify a period within which the appeal must be heard. Is it seven days, seven weeks or seven months? Unless there is a clear requirement for a tribunal to meet and hear the appeal quickly, the right to appeal in itself will be totally meaningless.

Would additional resources—I look to the Ministers here—be available to the health authorities to ensure that the appeals procedure was speedy and efficient? Given the difficulty of getting any additional resources out of Conservative Members, there may be some reason to doubt that such resources would be forthcoming.

The concept of a tribunal procedure would create yet more bureaucracy for women seeking abortions. It would be an additional ordeal for such women to have to face a tribunal. Would there be provision for them to be represented, and in what way? Would they have to be medically examined by members of the tribunal? Who would the members of the tribunal be, and how would they be selected? What would be the position of the doctors who had refused the abortion, or any others who were responsible for delay? Would lack of resources be a defence if the woman had not had the termination carried out because of a shortage of beds or medical personnel?

While I am sure that the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South is to try to help women by minimising unnecessary delays for those seeking an abortion, I suggest that the new clause is inadequate as drafted, and would create a new and unwieldy procedure which would work against women's interests.

There is a minor drafting point. The new clause refers in subsection (1) to an area health board and in subsection (2) to an area health authority, although both appear to refer to the same body. In fact, there are now district health authorities in England and Wales—I am sorry to say that there is no longer any regional hospital board—and health boards in Scotland, so we have a less democratic Health Service in Wales than in the rest of the country. Both should be included in both subsections if the power is to extend to England, Wales and Scotland.

Again, I ask hon. Members on both sides of the House to consider their position very carefully before they go through the Lobbies today. After hearing the arguments spelt out in Committee by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and his colleagues, it is our belief that their real intention is not to improve on the 1967 Act. Their true intention is to repeal the 1967 Act in its entirety. It would have been honourable for them to have said today, "That is our real intention. We do not want to improve on the Act. We want it to be scrapped altogether." We would respect their position if it were thus stated. To suggest that this is a way of reducing late abortions is a myth and a delusion.

12 noon

Mr. Cyril Smith *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to be taking a long time to clear the Lobbies. Would it be possible to investigate that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am keeping a careful eye on the time. It is clear that many hon. Members wish to take part in the vote. So far, the Division has not been overlong.

The House having divided: Ayes 265, Noes 222.

Division No. 286] **[12 noon**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob

Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNamara, Kevin
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Tim
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman
and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gardiner, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*

Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Richard
Nellist, Dave
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Viggers, Peter
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dafydd Wigley and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided:— Ayes 170, Noes 306.

Division No. 287] **[12.18 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sam Galbraith and
Mr. Dafydd Wigley

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.

Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Primarolo, Dawn
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stott, Roger
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Mr. Alan Amos.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier, when Mr. Speaker was in the Chair, there were a considerable number of points of order expressing great concern about what we understand to be the order in which the amendments on timing will be debated. As the morning has progressed, there seems to have been growing concern about the possible consequences, because, instead of having a straightforward descending series of timings, we

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

are faced with a form of legislative roulette in which it is possible that what seems likely to be the general view of the House—that a 24-week period is best—will probably be the last to be voted upon. So, almost by accident, that period may not be reached in spite of its being most probably the general view of the House.

I know that a considerable number of hon. Members who are in favour of the Bill have said all along—*[Interruption.]* I should be grateful if they would keep quiet because I do not think that they will dispute what I say. They have said that they want the House to have an opportunity to declare its view once and for all and in the firmest possible way on the maximum number of weeks. It seems to many of us that the best way to do that is to ensure that the decision on the 24-week period is not taken at the end of the series of votes. To leave it where Mr. Speaker has left it in his provisional selection is likely to lead to considerable disorder, dissatisfaction and the very great possibility that the basic view of the House will not be achieved.

Mr. Speaker said that he was bound by contradictory precedents. They were the precedents set by the Corrie Bill and by the general custom that amendments are taken in the order in which they are submitted. Those are conflicting precedents and it is quite reasonable for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or for Mr. Speaker to set a new precedent by saying that an orderly, seemly and rational consideration of these time limits is the best way for the House to go about its business because that will do good to its reputation. Many of us fear that if we do not do it that way the reputation of the House will be harmed and that there is a strong possibility that the general view of the House will not go through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. Many hon. Members were in the House at the beginning of the debate when we had fairly extensive points of order which Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am dealing with a point of order. Mr. Speaker made it clear at the time that before he made his selection he had considered extremely carefully the precedents and the arguments. He made quite clear the reasons for his decision and it is certainly not for me to go back on that decision. I suggest to the House that it would be advisable to get on with the debate. It may well be that the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman has very fairly outlined can be dealt with if we get on quickly with the debate.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick, and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the day I raised with Mr. Speaker the question of having a Division on amendments Nos. 40 and 41 and he said that he would allow a Division on amendment No. 40 or No. 41. In view of what has been said in the debate and the words of the promoter of the Bill, who said that he was prepared to accept amendments Nos. 40 and 41, will you ensure that if we get to that point, the House will have a chance to amend the Bill to include amendments Nos. 40 and 41 and consequential amendment No. 42?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have taken note of what was said about that. Of course I cannot anticipate whether time will allow the House to come to such decisions. The amendments do not come up for decision until after the next main debate.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to speak about Back Benchers' rights in this matter. We are dealing with amendments to do with time limits, the number of weeks, and Mr. Speaker has chosen amendments that allow us to discuss 20, 24 and 26 weeks. If those are scrapped the period of 18 weeks which is contained in the Bill will stand. I put my name to an amendment that was signed by many other hon. Members for 27 weeks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot debate Mr. Speaker's selection of amendments. That is what the hon. Gentleman is doing.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot debate Mr. Speaker's selection.

Clause 1

TIME-LIMIT FOR TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

Ms. Richardson: I beg to move amendment No. 2, page 1, line 6, leave out 'beginning of the 18th' and insert '26th'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 4, in page 1, line 6, leave out 'beginning of the 18th' and insert '20th completed'.

No. 5, in page 1, line 6, leave out 'beginning of the 18th' and insert '22nd completed'.

No. 7, in page 1, line 6, leave out 'beginning of the 18th' and insert 'end of the 24th'.

Ms. Richardson: In Committee we probed every aspect of the Bill as amended by its sponsors—*[Interruption.]*

Ms. Primarolo: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I cannot hear my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Will hon. Members who do not wish to take part in the debate leave the Chamber quietly and quickly?

Ms. Richardson: I apologise if hon. Members could not hear what I was saying. I was simply referring to the fact that in Committee, those opposing the Bill probed every conceivable aspect of the Bill, as amended by its sponsors. We maintained consistently on Second Reading and in Committee that there was no substantiated evidence that the Abortion Act 1967 is being abused or misused by women or doctors. Most importantly, we emphasised that all the evidence shows that the upper time limit of 28 weeks is treated with the greatest of respect by women and by doctors in England and Wales, and by women and doctors in Scotland, where there is effectively no upper time limit and fewer late abortions are performed than in England and Wales. I have moved amendment No. 2, to allow abortions up to 26 weeks. I have an amendment down for 27 weeks, as I did on the Corrie Bill, as that is the number

of weeks that is nearest to 28. One has to remember that as doctors take off two or four weeks, effectively, the period is less than 26 weeks anyway.

We probed every aspect of the Bill, as amended, while we maintained our position that no change in the upper limit was required and that the time limit from the beginning of the 18 weeks was unacceptable. It became clear during the course of our discussions that the sponsors of the Bill take an absolutist and fundamentalist line on abortion. On innumerable occasions, each one of them has reiterated that he or she is opposed to all abortions and is willing to barter with women's bodies and gamble with children's lives to try to maximise support for the Bill and inflict a substantial blow on the 1967 Act, which has given women and doctors 20 years of safe and legal operations.

In choosing the arbitrary time limit from the beginning of 18 weeks, the sponsors of the Bill have sought to set the terms of the debate so that other equally unacceptable time limits have been opposed as compromises, and that their own restrictive amendments to the Bill—on foetal abnormalities, under-18 rape and incest—can be posed as concessions. I recall the way that the under-18 rape amendment, which is now in the Bill, was moved. I am sure that my hon. Friends who were on the Committee will recall that it was moved as a concession. I think that it was appalling to divide young women in that way by introducing an arbitrary period of 18 weeks.

12.45 pm

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend has said that all members of the Committee were convinced that neither doctors nor women were abusing the 1967 legislation. I put it to her that some doctors are guilty of abuse. I understand that 20 per cent. of women who have abortions after 28 weeks come forward before 12 weeks. Delay is a major cause of late abortion. It is an abuse of the existing legislation and it should be rectified, but the Bill does not seek to do that.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend is right but she is referring to a different form of abuse from the one that I was addressing. It was argued by Conservative Members that doctors were abusing the Act wholesale by performing abortions when they should not. We continue to deny that. As my hon. Friend has said, there are doctors who, for various reasons, deny a woman an abortion when she is entitled to have one. Some refuse even to pass her on to a doctor who will give her proper advice.

In speaking to the 26-week amendment I want to dispel the belief that some hon. Members may have that it represents a compromise or a concession. Any legal time limit is, in practice, taken by doctors to be a minimum of two weeks less due to difficulties in estimating gestational age and fears of prosecution that might result from an incorrect estimate. My hon. Friend will recall that there was a short debate in Committee on the difficulties in estimating gestational age. Our arguments were rejected. I recall what was said by the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) in rejecting the amendment. She claimed that it would bring the time limit to 20 weeks rather than to leave it at 18, which is what she wanted. That was further confirmation that she wants very early abortions at the end of 17 weeks.

Doctors' fear of prosecution can only have been grossly increased by the way in which the campaign has been waged both inside and outside the House. We are discussing time limits of 15 weeks, 18 weeks, 20 weeks, 22 weeks and 24 weeks. This is how time limits of 17 weeks, 20 weeks, 24 weeks and 26 weeks are being put into practice. if we remove two weeks from all the numbers of weeks, the result is that we are discussing 15 weeks, 18 weeks, 20 weeks, 22 weeks and 24 weeks. We must keep that in the forefront of our minds.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Lady has referred to fears of prosecution. Does she agree that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), the promoter of the Bill, has made it clear that in his view his campaign has already led to a substantial reduction in the number of women presenting themselves for abortion? Surely this is the appropriate way in which to proceed. By voluntary activity, persuasion and example, rather than an extension of the criminal law, we shall deal more satisfactorily with a sensitive and intimate subject.

Ms. Richardson: Yes. The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. We feel that there are many other ways of reducing the rate of abortions at a high week level than the way that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has chosen.

I do not wish to digress, but two of my hon. Friends and I tabled an amendment to introduce self-referral for woman up to the 12th week of pregnancy—that is what happens on the continent. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Abortion on demand?"] It is not abortion on demand. A doctor must be present when an abortion is carried out. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that women should do it themselves. In effect, if the doctor agrees, it is abortion on request. In most European countries that is what happens. A woman may have an abortion up to the 12th week. That has resulted in reducing the rate of abortion because women find it easier to obtain one, and the Health Service provision there makes this possible.

Whatever the amendments may say, effectively we are talking about time limits that are two weeks below those listed. That point has been made strongly by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, which has written to all Members of the House and is acknowledged—even by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill—to be an organisation of integrity. The BPAS states that it will ban abortions under the provisions of the 1967 Act at 15 weeks if the time limits remains at

"the beginning of the 18th week of pregnancy,"

as suggested in the Bill.

It goes on to say that to ensure that they do not break the law they will work to 20 weeks for a 22-week limit and 22 weeks for a 24-week limit. This would mean that 17,000 women, using 1986 figures, will be denied an abortion and will be forced to continue with a pregnancy which could previously have been carried out legally and safely. That is what the BPAS has been forced to do. It is important at this stage to dispel the myth that has been created that late back-street abortions were not and therefore will not now be a problem.

We must remember that it took some years before women, general practitioners and consultants learnt fully about the abortion rights that came into force in 1968. At that time no funds were allocated to the NHS to set up an abortion service.

If we consider the years from 1968 we find that deaths continued not only from illegal abortions, but from illegal-late abortions. From 1970 to 1972, 38 women died from illegal abortions: three at 20 weeks; two at 26 weeks; one at 27 weeks——

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will the hon. Lady explain how many of those women were foreign women coming to this country for late abortions?

Ms. Richardson: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot tell him because I am not sure that the DHSS figures that we have go back that far. The figures that I am quoting can be substantiated by the DHSS and I shall give him the evidence in writing with great pleasure if he wishes to see it. I am not lying.

Between 1973 and 1975, of the 10 women who died three were 16 weeks pregnant and one was 22 weeks pregnant. Between 1976 and 1978—as late as that—four women died. One died from a self-induced abortion at 18 weeks and one at 20 weeks. Between 1979 and 1981 only one woman died of an illegal abortion and two of unspecified abortions. The illegal abortion had been carried out at 27 weeks.

Those tragic deaths included young women, single women, women with other children and women with no children. We really cannot turn our backs on that evidence. Despite the amendment that was carried in Committee by the Bill's sponsors, the exemption on the detection of foetal disability is a serious point and will remain so with time limits higher than the 17th week.

All hon. Members will have received a letter from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Although the royal colleges claim that they would settle for 24 weeks as an upper time limit, they point to the deficiencies in the Bill, apart from the time limits. Even with the amendment that was agreed in Committee tabled by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), which is alleged to cover exceptions for foetal abnormality, the royal colleges did not believe that the Bill would cover all the cases.

Mr. Thurnham: Is the hon. Lady referring to a letter that I received on 26 April from Professor Beard, the chairman of the joint committee on foetal viability and clinical practice at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, in which he said:

"We consider that the present Abortion Act of 1967 functions well, and that if the proposed Abortion (Amendment) Bill became law it would not be in the best interests of women in this country."?

Ms. Richardson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. The royal colleges and other organisations have made it clear that, whatever upper time limit is agreed by Parliament, it will not make the Bill acceptable. All hon. Members who are minded otherwise should reflect on that.

As I have said, a 24-week limit would, in effect, be 22 weeks. That will still cause serious problems for ultra sound screening and amniocentesis tests which are the major tests for detecting physical and mental disability.

As we have heard, the amniocentesis test is not available until 16 weeks, and the results take up to four weeks to obtain. In some cases, the tests have to be repeated. A friend of mine had an amniocentesis test at 16 weeks. She waited three weeks and then had to have another before it could be confirmed that she was carrying an abnormal foetus. She eventually had an abortion at 22 weeks.

Having had an amniocentesis test, a woman would have reached 20 weeks before the results of the first test were known. Where a second test is required, the 24-week time limit would provide the necessary leeway for an abortion to be carried out under the provisions of the Abortion Act 1967. No consideration can be taken into account other than the severity of the detected foetal abnormality. No consideration can be taken of the woman's circumstances, age or economic and social conditions.

I ask the House to pause for a moment. If we pass the Bill, we must bear in mind the anguish and anxiety that we will inflict on many women who would at least like to think that they had some kind of choice if they found themselves in those difficult circumstances. I admit that we discussed that point at length in Committee. However, we must take into account the mental stress that poverty and poor housing can cause to women.

1 pm

Today is Friday. When all this is over in the House of Commons, I shall be going to my surgery—in common, no doubt, with many of my hon. Friends. I know before I get there that at least a dozen, perhaps 20, housing cases will be awaiting me. People—maninly women—who bear the responsibility of the family, come along and say, "I am in a terrible state. I have three children." I am not talking about women asking for abortions. I am talking about the strain from which they suffer. Such women, with two or three children, may be living on the 10th floor of a block with the lift always out of order. I can imagine many such women, if they become pregnant again, thinking, "My gosh, I really cannot go through with this"—and who could blame them? Yet those hon. Members who are sponsoring the Bill and who intend to see it through would toss those people on one side. I think that that is cruel.

Mr. Shersby: What the hon. Lady is now saying goes to the heart of the debate. As I understand it, she is arguing that if a woman is under stress, in the difficult circumstances that she describes—and I agree that all hon. Members come into contact with women in that condition—she should then be able to obtain an abortion for social reasons, because of the stress on her family, because her home is overcrowded or for some similar reason.

Surely this is what the real argument is about. A substantial number of people feel that it is not legitimate for a woman to ask for an abortion for those social reasons.

Ms. Short: She should make her own decision.

Mr. Shersby: This the crux. Will the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) amplify that point? Will she clarify why an abortion should be allowed simply on grounds of stress or overcrowding?

Ms. Richardson: I thought that I had done so. I entirely accept that such a woman could probably obtain an abortion up to the end of the 17th week under the Bill, but we are thinking beyond that point. As has been said repeatedly in the Chamber, in Committee and elsewhere, it is not always possible to get the two doctors—or, in this case, doctor and consultant gynaecologist—before the end of the 17th week, and we are very worried. Although that may not involve a large number of women, many will feel threatened, because the Act—if we are unfortunate enough to see it become one—will be hanging over them, and they will not know what to do. I believe that the House has a duty to take into account the so-called social reasons—although in most people's terminology "social" means something more pleasant.

Mr. Alton: Not once has the hon. Lady made any mention—I hope that she will—of what happens to the child involved in a late abortion: the child that is dismembered in the course of a dilatation and evacuation operation; the child that is placed in a black sack and incinerated, as in the case of the Carlisle baby, at 21 weeks' gestation after struggling for life for three hours. Not once has she mentioned the child.

Ms. Richardson: It is necessary to weigh these matters up.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Is my hon. Friend aware that the doctor who refused to treat the foetus in the Carlisle case was a member of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child? Is she aware that when the health authority looked into the matter, it decided that the doctor had made the right decision? Is she aware that Life decided to call in the police, which meant that the woman involved had to be told what had happened and had to be interviewed by the police for three hours? Is she aware that the police finally decided that there was no case to answer? Is she aware that pressure has been exerted on the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for an inquest to be held, which means that the mother will have to go and register the death of the child and will probably have to testify at the inquest?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are getting rather wide of the matter before the House.

Ms. Richardson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. it happened in his constituency. He has taken a close and concerned interest in the matter.

I shall say something about the Carlisle bably. I could not understand why the matter was not reported at the time. It should have been. If anything went wrong, it should have been dealt with in the proper way at the time. I do not understand why it should have come up so much later. From *Time Out*, I understand that the hon. member for Mossley Hill—he will correct me if I am wrong—prompted the coroner to have an inquest. That seems to be rather strange. Why did the hon. Member for Mossley Hill do it recently? Why did he not do it at the time?

Mr. Alton *rose*——

Ms. Richardson: If I may continue before the hon. Gentleman intervenes.

Time Out informed me that it has spoken to the coroner and that the coroner, who was drawn in at that late stage, relatively recently, on looking at the files, decided that perhaps there should have been a registration of death. It was too late to do anything about the body of the child, because he had to look at the files. Apparently, the coroner then wrote to the Home Secretary to inform him of that. As the hon. Member for Mossley Hill had raised the matter with him, out of courtesy the coroner also wrote to the hon. Gentleman. I have it written in shorthand, as it was given to me by *Time Out*. The coroner said:

"I was very startled when it suddenly appeared in the press. I only wrote to tell Mr. Alton as a matter of courtesy. Maybe I was very naive, but it just didn't cross my mind that he would announce it to the press."

Interesting, is it not?

Mr. Alton: It is a public letter. It does not state in any way that it is confidential. It states:

"I received the police file on 21st April, and having studied it carefully I came to the conclusion that an Inquest would be in the public interest. I have posted a detailed report to the Home Office today, so that the Secretary of State may decide whether he considers an Inquest desirable."

The letter is signed by Ian Morton, coroner for north-east Cumbria. His reply is rather more reliable than the shorthand notes from *Time Out*.

Ms. Richardson: That does not cross what I have said.

Mr. Martlew: I talked to the coroner this morning. He is dismayed at the use that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill has made of the information.

Ms. Richardson: Again, there is confirmation of the whole matter.

I return to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) and other hon. Members have made. What about the stress to the mother? I wonder whether the hon. Member for Mossley Hill considered, belatedly, bringing that to the attention of the coroner. I wonder whether he sat down and thought, "Well, now, we are going to have to get this woman to court." That is appalling. That woman had an abortion. As everybody says, abortions are not lightly undertaken. Often—not always, but often—they leave emotional scars. Now, because the coroner says that there should have been an inquest, that poor woman will have to go through the whole thing again.

Mrs. Gorman: On the matter relating to the baby in pieces, which was raised by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), we have heard the story time and again. I consulted Dr. Wendy Savage, one of our leading experts. She consulted Mr. Arnie Finks, one of the world's leading experts, and he said that, before an abortion of this kind is undertaken, and even before a caesarian operation is performed, the amount of anaesthetic given to the mother has to be terribly tightly controlled because it affects the foetus. When there is to be an abortion by this method, the mother is given a full anaesthetic and the foetus is entirely anaesthetised and probably dead. The idea of the foetus alive and in pieces is an absolute travesty of the facts. It is a fact that, even in caesarian operations, to protect the foetus from the effects of the aneasthetic, the mother is sometimes not completely anaesthetised.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Lady—whom I called my hon. Friend for the purposes of debate in Committee, but who is now once again the hon. Lady—has put the matter in perspective. It is a matter of balance. The mother's wishes are paramount. She must make the decision in consultation with her husband or the partner with whom she lives, who is the father of the child. We want such a decision to be taken in those circumstances.

Mr. Tredinnick: I should point out that the Channel 4 programme "Women in View" considered the Carlisle incident and the surrounding publicity. It found that a local journalist, running his own freelance agency, had made £5,000 from the story, which he obtained from the curate, whom I shall not name, at St. Bride's, Carlisle, who happened to be a member of SPUC.

Ms. Richardson: The further we go into this matter, the murkier it becomes.

Ms. Short: We must put this matter right on the record because the House and the Committee were misled about the nature of the disability affecting the foetus in that case.

[Ms. Short]

It was suggested that it was a minor skin complaint, but it was a serious condition that can lead to suffering, rupture of the skin and internal organs and to death. The woman was told that her foetus was subject to those conditions, not to a minor skin complaint. The record should not be distorted as it has been.

Ms. Richardson: That is right and we shall see what develops from that. The publicity surrounding that event appears to have been geared beautifully—perhaps "specifically" would be a more appropriate word to use—towards gaining publicity for the Bill. I deplore such tactics.

Mr. Martlew: The abortion in question took place in July 1987 and was brought to the fore on Second Reading.

Ms. Richardson: I am glad that my hon. Friend has put that on the record because I had forgotten that point. He drew the original article to my attention and I was amazed to find that the incident took place so long ago.

Mr. Alton: That is an important point. That information became public knowledge, not as a result of action taken by SPUC, Life or myself, but because the doctor and the nurses involved found the procedures so repugnant that they swore affidavits to that effect and asked for an investigation. The coroner has now said that there should be an inquest, because that would be in the public interest, and that should surely validate their action.

Ms. Richardson: I do not know sufficient——

Mr. Martlew *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should allow the hon. Lady to deal with one intervention at a time.

Ms. Richardson: As my hon. Friend is the Member for Carlisle and has taken such a close interest in the matter, I am sure that he would be able to elucidate that point.

Mr. Martlew: The matter became public knowledge originally through an article in the *Catholic Herald*. It was then taken up by the *Sunday People*, which gave a distorted view. An even more distorted view was given by the *Sunday Mirror*, which supposedly carried out an interview with the mother—which never in fact took place—in which she supposedly said that her child would be born a freak. No reporter ever talked to that lady and that comment was never made to that lady by the gynaecologist concerned.

Ms. Richardson: When we see the *Official Report* of the debate we can piece together the true facts of the Carlisle case in a way that we could not previously do. I am glad that some of the details of it are now on the record.

1.15 pm

There have been a number of interventions during my speech, but I shall now conclude my remarks as I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. The Bill is unacceptable, irrespective of the time limits. It does not take into account the social reasons that we have been discussing. Some problems are known only to those who are affected, and they should have the benefit of choice, albeit a limited choice under the 1967 Act. That is why that Act should be left intact.

A time limit of anything less than 26 weeks—which, in effect, is 24 weeks—would write off the interests of real, living women and their children in favour of the interests of an unviable foetus. We must make a decision today, and I hope that it will be the right one. From what the sponsors of the Bill said in Committee, I understand that they intend further attacks on the 1967 Act. That has also been made plain this morning. People will be forced to the defensive. I put down a marker that I will not be forced to the defensive—I shall feel forced to the offensive.

We must study the good practices of those European countries that have self-referral. We must ensure that the 1967 Act is responsive to need in every possible way, without going beyond the bounds of legality. We must ensure that the NHS responds adequately in every part of Britain. For example, it responds in the north but not in the west midlands. There must be decent, proper sex education at school and a properly funded family planning service. Funds should be made available for research into contraception so that women do not take the pill and then find, as some do, that it does not suit them, or that being fitted with an inter-uterine device does not do the trick. All those measures would make women safer. There is a large failure rate in contraception so it is no use people thinking that women are simply being careless. We must ensure genuine choice for women.

Hon. Members who want to end abortion will achieve only a return to back-street abortion. Those of us who support the 1967 Act want improvements so that there are safe and legal abortions, with back-up facilities, that allow women to live their lives with dignity and independence.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): The amendments are all aimed at the very heart of the Bill. I would prefer the Bill to limit abortions to the 18th week of pregnancy, but I made plain on Second Reading the fact that I was ready to join the search for a formula that would safeguard the position of the woman who might be bearing a child suffering from severe abnormality, and on whom tests to establish the facts had not been completed by the 18th week of her pregnancy.

That aspect was considered in detail in Committee and I moved an amendment that now forms part of the Bill. That was a genuine attempt by my hon. Friends and myself to keep faith with the House. A number of reservations have been aired, even by supporters of the Bill and it is necessary to keep faith with the House. The Bill that we now seek to amend further is not the Bill to which the House gave a substantial majority on Second Reading.

The amendments now being discussed seek to raise the limit for all abortions from the 18th week of pregnancy. We must be clear about what will be the effects of that on—if I may use the term for the first time today—the right to life of the unborn. The Bill in its present form does not change the grounds for abortion under the 1967 Act. The intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) was well intentioned, but the case he had in mind was irrelevant, because in all probability it would have been dealt with before the 18th week of pregnancy—very much earlier, probably.

The Bill concerns itself with the scandal of abortions for social reasons or for convenience. I remind the House that abortions under the social cause constitute the vast

majority of abortions performed after 18 weeks. No less than 92 per cent. of all late abortions are carried out on foetuses, which, if they were permitted to be born, would be perfectly normal and healthy. Many of us are appalled that under the 1967 Act, 2·6 million foetuses had been destroyed by 1986. If they had been allowed to be born, most of them would have grown into healthy and normal children. Slaughter on that scale continues, and the purpose of the Bill—

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford) *rose—*

Sir Bernard Braine: I shall not give way, because a number of other hon. Members wish to speak, and owing to what has gone before, there is little time. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand.

The Bill deals with only a small proportion of abortions performed after 18 weeks, when the baby in the womb is perfectly formed. It is responsive to light and to sound, and it recognises its mother's voice. It differs in no material respect from what it will be 10 weeks later when, under the law, it is protected against the crime of destruction.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford) *rose——*

Sir Bernard Braine: I have already indicated that I shall not give way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way".] No, I must stick by my word. I did not give way to my hon. Friend, and I have a number of other points to make. I want to be brief, to give others an opportunity to speak.

Amendment No. 2 is wholly unacceptable to the Bill's supporters, and so is the amendment calling for a limit of 24 weeks. Both ignore the fact that at those gestational ages, a pre-term baby can survive. A study undertaken at Bristol maternity hospital in 1984 found that 72 per cent. of live-born infants of 22 to 27 weeks' gestation survived. That finding was published in a report from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists entitled "Pre-term Labour and its Consequences". Two years earlier, in 1982, the survival rate for the same group was 43 per cent. and in 1981 it was only 29 per cent. Legislation should reflect and not ignore advances in medical science and practice. We should not be confused by the word "viability", which is not an objective pointer in terms of the right to life. It is the level at which medical technology can sustain the life of a prematurely born baby rather than the point below which the baby is not a human being with a right to life and above which he or she should be protected by law.

I should have liked to say a great deal more, but I am anxious that the Bill should make progress. *[Interruption.]* If the House will not listen I shall develop the case that I intended to develop. The subject of my remarks has scarcely been mentioned today. It is the right to life of the unborn. On Second Reading, the House voted in favour of 18 weeks. The sponsors believe that we have the support of the majority in the country and we should prefer the Bill to remain as amended in Committee to meet the genuine concern of the House.

The amendments provide us with a choice and we shall shortly be exercising that choice. In doing so, we should remember that the unborn child marked down for abortion has no choice. It is denied the right to be born —the right to a life before death. In those circumstances, only we can choose life and I trust that the majority of us will do so

Mr. Steel: In considering the variety of amendments before us, it is right to pay some attention to the learned bodies that have given a great deal of thought to this issue. With the exception of one or two hon. Members with qualifications in this area, most of us are lay men and women and we are dealing with a very complicated question. I remind the House, therefore, that a number of detailed inquiries have been conducted into the whole subject of viability and we should take their conclusions into account.

The first was the distinguished committee of inquiry under Mrs. Justice Lane set up by the Government some years ago in response to continued criticism of the working of the Abortion Act 1967. On this narrow issue, that committee recommended that abortion should not be carried out beyond the 24th week of pregnancy. That was several years ago and the Government made various administrative changes in the light of that recommendation—no doubt the Minister will amplify this—which have meant that since that time very few abortions have been carried out beyond the 24-week limit. Nevertheless, the law still stands as it as created—not in 1967, but in 1929 by the Infant Life (Preservation) Act.

I believe that it is the will of the House, certainly by a clear majority, that the law should reflect the changes in medical practice that have taken place since then. I believe that if we could only secure expression for it there is probably a majority in the House in favour of a 24-week limit.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The right hon. Gentleman will have seen the Gallup poll conducted in January among 746 gynaecologists. Apart from abortion for foetal abnormality and threat to the life of the mother, they were asked what they thought should be the upper limit for legal abortions. Ninety-eight per cent. of the gynaecologists asked supported 24 weeks or below, which shows that there is no support among the medical profession—or, I suspect, in the House—for this amendment. Is it not time that we accepted our responsibility to the general public and debated the important amendments that the public want us to deal with?

Mr. Steel: I sympathise with the hon. Member. I am addressing my remarks to amendment No. 7, which deals with 24 weeks.

1.30 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I believe it to be the will of the House that there be a Division, I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think it is much too early. I think the House would prefer to hear the Minister and the promoter of the Bill, together with those who oppose the amendments.

Mr. Steel: I was outlining to the House what I believed was the first substantial committee of inquiry into the issue, which recommended to Parliament and to Government that there should be a limit of 24 weeks. That committee of inquiry took place some years ago. The most recent study was conducted not by this House, but by a Select Committee of another place. Only a few weeks ago

[Mr. Steel]

that Committee, having deliberated on a Bill to amend the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, concluded that the limit should be 24 weeks.

The third study of this matter was by a committee that included representatives of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the British Paediatric Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Midwives, the British Medical Association and the Department of Health and Social Security. That very important committee published a report in August 1985 on foetal viability and clinical practice. Its recommendation was clear. It said that the gestational age after which a foetus is considered viable should be changed from the present limit of 28 weeks to 24 weeks of gestation.

The committee continued:

"a strong argument which persuaded the Committee against recommending a gestational age that is set too low, is the certainty that fear ignorance and administrative delays will continue to be a major reason for late attendance for termination of pregnancy. These late attenders are usually the women in greatest need of help—the very young and socially deprived."

That was not a committee of social workers. It was a highly expert medical committee that recommended to Parliament what should be the state of the law. We would be wise to consider its opinions.

Just before the Bill's Second Reading, the viability committee of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists circulated a statement reiterating the royal college's view that there should be a 24-week limit. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has left his seat, because this is an important argument that is contrary to his. The viability committee said:

"Twenty-four weeks gestation marks a . . . boundary below which the lungs are not expected to function. A reduction to 18 weeks"—

or for that matter any other limit—

"has no scientific basis and would discriminate against women who may be most in need."

On future medical advance, the committee said:

"Further medical expertise will increase survival rates rather than lower the age at which survival is possible."

For those reasons the House would be wise to accept an amendment to the 1967 legislation, creating a bar at 24 weeks of pregnancy. Remembering the point made by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) that the medical profession always operates within a two-week limit of safety, a legal statement that abortion may not take place beyond the 24th week will ensure that it will not happen after the 22nd week.

I say bluntly to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and to other hon. Members who support the Bill that, if they were honest, they would say that there is no ethical difference between an abortion at 10 weeks, 17 weeks or 24 weeks. From their standpoint, the alternatives are all equally wrong. Those of us who do not share that view have the responsibility of determining what the boundary of the criminal law should be.

I do not believe that any of the other amendments have any logical argument behind them. The 24-week amendment has the validity of scientific opinion and, therefore, of public opinion behind it. By passing it into legislation we should be keeping open the option created in 1967 for women and their medical advisers to secure safe and legal termination of pregnancy as the lesser of two evils in any given situation in which they decide to do that. That is what the House would be wise to vote for.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): By coming back to the House with the amendments that we made in Committee we have kept faith. We promised particularly to take on board the issue of handicap, and by doing that and ensuring that the House—if it is allowed to get to that stage—has a choice of weeks, we have kept complete faith.

One thing has not been mentioned during the debate, yet it is the most fundamental of all. What we are deciding today is awesome. It is what is human life? When is a human being not a human being? How can we, in a supposedly civilised society, have a law that allows the treatment of two babies of identical age to vary to such an extent that the one is cherished and its life fought for and the other is disposed of as having no value? I ask only that when we vote for 20, 22 or any other number of weeks, we remember that, if we would not do to a baby in an incubator what we would to a baby in the course of an abortion, we should vote to outlaw these abortions.

Mr. Alton: I commend to the House the best possible option which, from the point of view of the promoter and sponsors of the Bill, would be that of 20 weeks. We commend it because it will save lives. Twenty-four weeks is a no-change option, which is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and others support it.

I hope that the House will cease to hide behind euphemisms such as "products of conception", zygote, embryo and foetus, which itself means little one. But we do not recognise that little one's right to life, and that is what the Bill seeks to do. It is extraordinary that foetal brain material can be used to give another life. What does that say about the unborn child? What do we allow to happen to the unborn child? The most dangerous place for it is inside the womb. Dilation and evacuation require the crushing of the baby's skull, the breaking of its spine and its removal piece by piece, and it is a barbaric, degrading and corrupting practice to allow in our country. Prostaglandins require the baby to be brought on through a labour that can go on for hours, and it can be left writhing in agony as a result. No anaesthetics are used in these cases. This time limit was set 59 years ago. Surely, as a matter of public policy, we should be reviewing it.

No other country in western Europe allows abortions as late as we do. The average EEC time limit is 12 to 14 weeks. In Sweden, which is outside the European Community, it is 18 weeks. That is why the Bill is reasonable and why hon. Members should vote for the best possible option that is available today—the 20-week option.

Mr. Newton: On Second Reading, I drew attention to the fact that abortion was an issue on which there are deeply held and wholly conflicting views, and I am sure that the whole House agrees with that. I also said then and I repeat now that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) was entitled to be judged on the proposals before the House rather than on any views that he might hold about what, from his perspective, an ideal position would be. I set out at some length some of the facts about tests and about other matters which I hoped would help the House to reach a conclusion. In view of the pressure of

time on the House and what I perceive to be a general desire to reach a conclusion on these matters in the public interest, I shall keep my speech brief. I hope that I carry the whole House with me on that.

In the spirit in which I approached the Second Reading debate during which I drew attention to some of the problems, it is right to recognise that the amendments to the Bill in Committee which changed its form before it returned to the House, are of some significance. They go some way to seek to meet the concerns about disability and the birth of disabled children. It is for the House to judge how far they go to meet those concerns. We should at least recognise the importance of the changes that have been made, even if there are those who feel that they do not provide the basis for consensus on the 18-week time limit which remains in the Bill.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister give the Government's view on the wording of clause 1(2)(b) which says:

"if the child were born it would suffer from severe physical or mental disability (the nature of the disability to be identified in the certificate)"?

Will the Minister give the Government's view without further defining the physical or mental disability and the dangers of uneven practice developing in the countries of Britain? What guidance can the Department give on the satisfactory or otherwise nature of that wording?

Mr. Newton: I shall cover that point briefly in a moment. I shall deliver my speech in the order that seems sensible in the interests of consistency and brevity.

I should like to deal with the inter-relationship of the matters that we are dealing with now and the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929. I think that the House understands that in the Abortion Act 1967 there is no time limit whatever on abortion. It is sometimes presumed that such a time limit is set by the operation of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act. It is important that that should be understood, but I do not propose to reiterate the rather complex lines of argument underlying the point.

As Minister for Health I owe the House such assessment as is available from the advice available to me about the impact of the Bill on the current arrangements for abortion that are laid down in the 1967 Act. This picks up the point made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). It is indisputable—indeed, it is the purpose—that there would be some reduction in the number of abortions that could be carried out legally. The Department estimates that at least 7,630 fewer abortions would have been carried out in England and Wales in 1986 if the Bill as it stands had been in force. About half the women affected would have been non-residents and the remaining abortions—for very young women or those in much later life which might go ahead at present in appropriate circumstances—would have been prohibited. As I said on Second Reading, out of a total of 8,276 abortions in England and Wales in 1986 at a gestational age of 18 weeks or over, more than one third were to women under 20 and about 3 per cent. were to women aged 40 and over.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon asked about wording in the Bill. It is undeniably a matter of some uncertainty how doctors and others would interpret the Bill. It is possible that the exemption for foetal handicap, which is more tightly drawn than the present ground 4, could mean that fewer abortions would be carried out in that category. The difficulty and part of the uncertainty arises from the fact that the medical technology involved is not sufficiently refined to make it possible to foretell with certainty the degree of disability that a child would have after birth. Against that background, I cannot give the House a clear-cut or definite statement about the precise consequences of the change. It would be irresponsible of me to pretend that I could do that and I shall not seek to do so.

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Minister give way.?

Mr. Newton: No, because I feel that I owe the House a short speech. As Minister for Health and especially in view of the pressure of time, there is nothing else that I can properly say.

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: I should be grateful if the hon. Lady would let me continue. I am sure that the general mood of the House is that we should proceed with the debate.

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: Will the hon. Lady let me proceed?

At the end of all the arguments, I have to accept, as the House has to accept, that there is no single conclusive factual, technical or legal point which can make up the mind of the House as a whole or of any of us as individual Members.

1.45 pm

Mr. Steel: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman because the 1967 Act was his and it would be a proper courtesy for me to do so.

Mr. Steel: I am grateful to the Minister. I am seeking information from him, and do not seek to alter his opinions. Will he confirm that the parliamentary answers that he gave on 8 December about the time limits in other countries are correct in that in France the limit is 24 weeks, in Italy 23, in the Netherlands 24 and that the figures given by the promoter of the Bill are for the quite different limit for abortion on request in their law and are not the final limits for abortion?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that any answers that I have given in *Hansard* are correct on the basis of the best information available to me. All those points, while they appear to be facts, conceal a wealth of potential argument about the exact grounds on which abortions are permitted in different countries at different periods of time.

At the end of my Second Reading speech I emphasised, and I emphasise again, that in purely personal terms, not as a Minister or as a member of the Government, I was prepared to vote for some time limit, but I did not feel able to vote for the Bill as it then stood. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has gone a long way to meet some of those concerns, and I as an individual will take that into account. However, the questions I have to ask myself as a Member of Parliament, not as a Minister—I speak now as a Member of Parliament—are broad ones. For example, do we have a balance that commands the kind of consensus support in this matter that we would like?

Secondly, if the Bill were passed in its present form, with the 18-week limit and even with the changes, would it be likely to command a balance that would lead to consensus? If the House believes, as I do, that the answer

[Mr. Newton]

to both those questions is no, it would be right to vote for one of the compromise solutions. I shall not tell the House what I think it should vote for; it would be wrong for me to do so. But it is in that spirit that I shall decide which of the amendments to vote for.

Ms. Ruddock: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask for your assistance in this matter, as I am a new Member. The Minister referred to the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 and I would like to ask him to clarify that reference and to provide the House with information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put, *but* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *withheld his assent, and declined then to put that Question.*

Ms. Short: I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is important that the House ceases to play political games and concentrates on what is being proposed here today. We know that there is probably a majority in the House for the recommendation of the BMA that the abortion limit should come down to 24 weeks. I would support that, if we could also have exceptions for the hard cases about which we all know —late detection of foetal abnormality or the menopausal woman or young girl who does not know that she is pregnant until very late. What is on offer is enormously different. I believe—*[Interruption.]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot even hear myself speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was sitting at my hon. Friend's side and it was difficult to hear her. There is a deliberate ploy on the part of Conservative Members to intimidate or participate in conversations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated what I was about to say. I must listen to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short), and it is even more difficult to hear what she is saying at this end of the Chamber than from the area in which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is sitting.

Ms. Short: Most of the medical bodies have recommended—this has been accepted by a majority in this place—a time limit of 24 weeks. I would find that limit completely acceptable if there were an exception for hard cases.

The House must make an important choice that will affect the lives of many women and families. Present practice is, in effect, a 24-week limit. The recommendation of the DHSS is that there should be no abortion post-24 weeks except in hard cases. Only 29 abortions took place post-24 weeks in 1986 the last complete year for which figures are available to us. For the three quarters of the next year there were 19 such abortions. The House wants a 24-week limit with exceptions. The Select Committee of another place recommended a 24-week limit with exceptions. We have in practice a 24-week limit with exceptions. I beg the House seriously to note that. What is on offer is not the 24-week reform that the majority of hon. Members have said in various surveys, for example, that they want. Instead, we have a serious restriction that is based on no rational scientific or technical evidence. It has been put before us by those who are completely opposed to all abortion. I respect them for taking that view, but I cannot respect them for not having the guts to put that proposition before the House. They will not do that because they know that that proposition would not be carried. Instead, they have chosen to introduce a duplicitous Bill. They pretend that they are trying to prevent late abortion, but that is not their true position.

I should like to see a series of actions taken to prevent late abortion. That would find great favour on the Opposition Benches.

Mrs. Wise: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be much better if those who have handicapped children received more support? The House could provide more support. Is my hon. Friend aware that 200 of those who voted for the Bill's Second Reading had, 10 days earlier, voted against an attendance allowance for severely disabled children? Further, is she aware that five of the 12 sponsors of the Bill voted against an attendance allowance for severely disabled children?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us not have a re-run of a social security debate.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend makes her own point. Half the people of our world go hungry nearly every day, yet that world produces twice as much food as the peoples of the world need. When we consider the stance that is taken by Conservative Members on international economic change that could produce a better life for the poor, I cannot accept that they are seriously committed to the beauty and preservation of human life. They are putting another agenda before us.

Those who are critical of the Bill want to do everything possible to prevent late abortion. It is gravely wrong—the Minister should take this point much more seriously than he does—that 20 per cent. of abortions that take place after 20 weeks involve women who referred themselves before 12 weeks. Delays are built into our legislation and the way in which the NHS behaves, and these result in late abortions. We could avoid that. We could remove a whole series of late abortions.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Does the hon. Lady agree that there is no need for self-referral to encourage earlier abortions? I am sure that we are united in our desire to cut out the trauma of a late abortion, which is particularly horrible for the doctors, the gynaecologists, and the mother as well as for her immediate family. At a later stage, we should consider providing for the signature of one doctor for an abortion up to 12 weeks. Surely that would overcome people's natural fear about self-referral—their fear about a woman's right to demand from a doctor an abortion whenever she wants. Such self-referral may be abused by women who use abortion as a form of contraception—a particularly unpleasant way of using abortion. If we agree to a time limit of 24 weeks today—more than 160 hon. Members are in favour of that—does she agree that an

amendment at a later stage to require the signature of one doctor would overcome many of the problems of late abortion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be brief and relevant.

Ms. Short: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. If the House wants to make one change in our legislation that would prevent late abortion, and if the sponsors of the Bill are as distressed about late abortion as they claim, we should learn from our European partners.

Sir Bernard Braine: I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that there are many strands of opinion still wishing expression.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find it distressing that hon. Members who claim to be deeply concerned about this matter will not listen to serious proposals that would achieve the objectives of which they claim to be in favour.

Hon. Members claim to be in favour of preventing late abortion. It is absolutely proven by medical evidence and by experience in other European countries that, if we allow self-referral—let us be clear that that means self-referral to one doctor and not women deciding for themselves without medical advice—we would prevent an enormous number of late abortions. We would prevent the distress that that means for doctors, nurses, the other medical staff and the woman.

Ms. Primarolo: I accept the distress that is felt by the medical profession, but that feeling is also shared by the woman, and she appears to have been forgotten by the promoters of the Bill. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is an impossible task to prove, beyond doubt, the date of gestation? If the Bill goes through, it could result in criminal prosecutions against practitioners and women seeking abortions. In that way, the Bill is based on sand and it is opening the way to further misery.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Because of the ulterior motives that lie behind the Bill, one of the terrible things about it is that it is not well constructed. The provisions contained in the previous legislation relating to doctors acting in good faith——

Mr. Alton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the House does not move to a closure within the next two minutes, it will be denied the opportunity to vote on the amendments. Therefore, I beg to move, That the Question be now put—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has just heard the ruling from the Chair. It was given within minutes of his rising.

Mr. Alton: Further to that point of order. Therefore, I beg to move again, That the Question be now put—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I see no reason to vary the ruling that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Alton *rose*——

Hon. Members: Name him.

Mr. Alton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to detain the House. When Mr. Speaker was in the Chair this morning, he said that he would take into account the time that was wasted on petitions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Wasted?"] and wasted on any number of other devices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not persist in challenging my ruling. It is a matter for the occupant of the Chair and I have ruled.

2 pm

Ms. Short: I am trying to make a number of enormously serious points which have not been put before during the debate and I am being interrupted constantly. Therefore, we cannot have a rational debate about these very serious matters. That is deeply regrettable.

I was replying to an intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) about the position in which medical practitioners would be placed by the Bill. Under the provisions in previous legislation, if practitioners made a judgment in good faith, that was all that was required of them. That will be removed and doctors in hospitals throughout the country, who face all the difficulties where women request abortions, will face criminal prosecution in many instances if they do their very best in good faith to interpret the law and give women the rights that they understand the law to provide.

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Lady said earlier that she was in favour of 24 weeks as a reasonable and workable compromise. However, she will have heard the Minister say that 24 weeks in law really means 22 weeks in practice. The figures provided by the professionals show that whereas—*[Interruption.]* I understood that the 24 weeks would be reduced by two weeks. That comment has been made by many people.

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: I do not believe that the Minister can intervene on an intervention.

Is the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) aware that over the 24-weeks limit only 29 abortions were performed in 1986 whereas at the 23-week to 24-week stage, there were as many as 1,065 abortions? To have 24 weeks in practice the House may well vote in a few minutes for 26 weeks which will be interpreted in that way by the professionals.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman's point is crucial. The House wants 24 weeks in practice. In practice we have 24 weeks and there were only 29 exceptions in 1986. The best way for the House to vote for 24 weeks is to vote the Bill down.

Ms. Diane Abbot (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms. Short: The truth is objectively—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We do not conduct our debates in this fashion. There should be no heckling from the Front Benches below the Gangway.

Ms. Short: I shall be grateful if you will allow me a few more minutes, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

I want to make one or two more points to the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) who keeps asking

[Ms. Short]

about the unborn child's right to life. That is a very important question. There are competing rights. However, I put these points to the right hon. Member for Castle Point and to all those who take a very anti-abortion stance. Those people are absolutely entitled to that right of conscience and to live with it. However, they have no entitlement to impose that view on others who, in conscience, take a different view. Those people have no sublime right to tell others in this country and the majority of public opinion, which takes a different view from theirs, that the law will be changed to force their view on others. That is wrong. The minority should not abuse the law in that way. They should exercise their conscience in their own personal, moral decision-making and through their own religious convictions.

Mrs. Peacock: I listened very carefully to the hon. Lady's last few remarks. Did she not earlier suggest that consultants should not be allowed that same privilege; that they should be required to carry out abortions irrespective of their consciences?

Ms. Short: Absolutely not. All those questions are very important. I would insist on the right of anyone to take a stand on conscience, including anyone in the medical profession who does not want to participate in abortions. However, the minority do not have a right to prevent women and families who make other decisions from having their rights under the law. It is perfectly possible for us to arrange things so that the two sides do not collide. The Minister—I have already put this point to him—should require all National Health Service areas to plan the local provision of abortion facilities. They should then appoint a range of practitioners. Plenty of gynaecological work does not involve abortion. This does not mean that those who are opposed to abortion could not be appointed and promoted. That is not incompatible with the need. We can respect medical practitioners who are opposed to abortion, and extend the rights of the law to all who want to take up those rights.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does the hon. Lady agree that one of the more crass and dangerous provisions of this very misconceived Bill is the suggestion that rape and incest, while they might be grounds for termination in women below the age of 18, would not be so in women above that age? Will she address that peculiar anomaly?

Ms. Short: I was coming to that. It is one of the most offensive features of this offensive Bill. How can the sponsors possibly say that a woman under 18 who is raped or sexually abused is more innocent than a woman over 18? Many women who are sexually abused or raped are mentally disturbed by the experience, in some of the most awful and brutal cases. There are known cases, to which I would refer if we had more time, of women being so distressed and upset that they did not report their pregnancy until a stage that would be too late under the Bill.

Every hon. Member was consulted about how rape could be prevented. An article in *Woman* or *Woman's Own* was, I believe, sent to all of us. It told the story of a woman in her 50s who told how she was raped in her 20s, and how it still disturbed her life. She had had a child as a consequence of the rape. She had never loved that child; she never could and never would. That is the most tragic thing that can be imagined.

The woman was telling the truth. That child, now an adult, had never been loved because the conception had been the result of a brutal and horrible rape. The Bill's provisions mean that more children with experience of being unwanted because they remind a woman of a brutal, horrible, unwanted sexual experience would be born. That strikes me as deeply disgusting, and, while I understand why some people hate the idea of abortion, I do not know how anyone could bear to put his name to a proposal to judge between those under 18 and those over 18.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that many women who were raped, whether they were younger or older than 18, would not have time to reflect on whether they could ever love a child born in such circumstances? Yet the Bill requires them to make up their minds before the 18th week of gestation.

Here again is a case of people who have no intention of listening to the arguments trying to bully and threaten their way—*[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friend has not heard my question, I shall repeat it. Obviously some hon. Members cannot realise that a woman who has been raped, no matter what age she is, will not have time to reflect on whether she will ever be able to love a child born in such circumstances—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Lady would make more progress if she were allowed to speak. We are debating this matter. I hope that the House realises that.

Mrs. Fyfe: It is no wish of mine to have to repeat again what I asked my hon. Friend, but I shall keep saying it until the House hears the point. It is important to realise that, no matter what the age of a woman, if she has been raped and becomes pregnant as a result she will not have time to consider whether she will ever be able to love a child born in such circumstances. The time limit in the Bill —*[Interruption.]*

Ms. Short: I agree with my hon. Friend. We shall proceed much more rapidly if Conservative Members do not make so much noise that it is impossible to hear. A long time was taken by my hon. Friend to make the same point three or four times, because it was absolutely impossible to hear her. She is absolutely right. Raped women are often deeply disturbed by their experience. They need time to come to terms with it, and they need time to consider whether they are emotionally capable of loving the child born as a result of rape. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill and his supporters do not have the right to intrude on such a deeply difficult decision.

I wish to make two other points.

Mr. Cyril Smith: *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 229.

Division No. 288] **[2.10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack

Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNamara, Kevin
Maginnis, Ken
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mallon, Seamus
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Bennett and
Miss Ann Widdecombe.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*

Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gardiner, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Riddick, Graham
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Ms. Joan Walley and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 222, Noes 315.

Division No. 289] **[2.27 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buck, Sir Antony
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Knox, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McCrindle, Robert
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Richard
Nellist, Dave
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Riddick, Graham
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Viggers, Peter
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dafydd Wigley and
Ms. Joan Walley.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jamman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*

Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McCusker, Harold
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNamara, Kevin
Maginnis, Ken
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mallon, Seamus
Mans, Keith
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Tim
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Mr. Nicholas Bennett.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after half-past Two o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered on Friday 13 May.

Mr. Alton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House considered the Bill on Second Reading, when it gave it a majority of 45 on a vote of 296 Members. In Committee, there were 30 hours of debate, 15 Divisions and 27 amendments. Now we have debated the Bill on Report this morning and it has completed its Report stage.

It would bring Parliament into disrepute if we were unable to complete the voting on the Report stage and give the Bill its Third Reading. Millions of people outside the House have followed our discussions this morning and over the months. It is genuinely a matter of great regret that the Bill cannot be completed today——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand how the hon. Gentleman feels, and his regret, but he must address himself to a point of order.

Mr. Alton: Because of these factors, and because there is so much concern that the matter should be resolved, I ask the Leader of the House, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make a statement about whether time might be provided at the end of business for the Bill to be further considered.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Proceedings on this Bill have not been concluded today. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who is in charge of the Bill, has named the next private Members' Bill day, Friday 13 May, as the day for further discussion of the Bill so that there may be an opportunity for the House to take its decisions on these matters if that is what it wishes to do.

The Government's position is already clear. It is not our practice to provide extra time for consideration of individual private Members' Bills.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the statement made by the Leader of the House. Would the Leader of the House be prepared to consider, in the light of the proceedings next week and in view of the proscrastination and filibustering of some hon. Members today——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not going to have recriminations of that kind this afternoon. The Leader of the House has heard what has been said.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) claimed that the Report stage of his Bill had been completed. Will you confirm that that is not so—that the Report stage is continuing and has yet to be completed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am in a somewhat unfortunate position, in view of the circumstances, because my private Members' Bill is down to be discussed first next Friday. It is called the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts by Children) Bill ——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. With respect, we cannot have all that now.

Mr. Day: I want to make it clear to the House that my Bill has received all-party support at every stage. It went through Committee in one morning and was unopposed on Second Reading.

If the Bill of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) comes to the Floor of the House, I hope that the House will allow a decision to be taken on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These are matters for the House to decide next Friday.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) announced that if his Bill did not get through he would enter a monastery, may we assume that the church's loss will be our gain and wish him godspeed?

Private Members' Bills

EMPTY PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY AID BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 July.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I ask hon. Members leaving the Chamber to do so quickly and quietly.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am concerned to ensure that when the remaining Orders of the Day are called there is quiet in the House so that, in so far as we can, we are able to discover the origin of objections.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that hon. Members will take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

INDECENT DISPLAYS (NEWSPAPERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Did you receive an objection to the Bill from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First, I heard an objection, and, secondly, I understand that the Bill has not been printed, so I cannot put it to the House anyway.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May

SMOKE DETECTORS IN HOUSES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 July.

UNFAIR REPORTING AND RIGHT OF REPLY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May.

HORSES, PONIES AND DONKEYS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK (TOBACCO SMOKING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May.

BLACKLISTS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May.

SCOTTISH CONSTITUTION (REFERENDUM) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an English Member of the Conservative party to object to the Second Reading of a Bill that has widespread support in Scotland, particularly in the light of yesterday's results——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady need not take her point of order any further. The answer to her question is yes.

Later—

Mrs. Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You did not offer me an opportunity to name a date for the Second Reading of the Scottish Constitution (Referendum) Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I beg the pardon of the hon. Lady and the House for making the same blunder on two occasions. What day?

Mrs. Ewing: Friday 13 May.

BETTING, GAMING AND LOTTERIES (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 May.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

Direct Labour Organisation, Hackney

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

2.48 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): There was a moment this morning when I thought that 550 MPs had turned up to hear my Adjournment debate. However, the Chamber is emptying rapidly and I hope that that is not a reflection on the quality of this very important debate.

The debate arises from a decision taken by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 31 March when he decided to close Hackney's major new-build direct labour organisation. Only two things of worth can be said about that decision. The first is that it was taken as the House was rising for the Easter recess, and was taken then in order to avoid political embarrassment for the Government. As such, the decision can be described as shoddy and irresponsible and, to use a favourite word of the Prime Minister's, gutless.

The second is that the first news of the closure went not to Hackney borough council or to either of the two hon. Members who represent Hackney but to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) in answer to a planted written question, and we must ask the Minister why. I think that the answer is that the Minister is known as a Right-wing political extremist and he needed another Right-wing political extremist to table the question for him. I go to Pembroke regularly, two or three times a year. Farmers there are not very happy with the hon. Member for Pembroke, and neither am I. If he concentrated more on what was going on in that part of the world rather than telling the Preseli district council that it ought not to be getting grants from the Government, he would not get such bad local press.

The background to the debate is that the Minister is known for his fanatical views on privatisation. He is prepared to push privatisation, whatever the consequences and whatever the loss of jobs, the damage to the social fabric, the loss to the public purse or the harm to the integrity of the Department of the Environment and the constitution. The House was shocked to learn that, as a result of his fanatical policies, both personally and in his capacity as Minister at the Department of the Environment, he is under investigation—for misconduct in relation to public funds—by the National Audit Office as a result of a complaint lodged with that office by a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

I have seen the papers, and it is a shocking case. The Minister appears to have put out a private contract to Cluttons for £40,000, when the Property Services Agency in-house could have carried out the contract for £1,300. We are about to witness a major political scandal, just as the closure of the DLO in Hackney is a major political scandal. I would not be surprised if the Prime Minister had to sack the Minister, who is sitting there smiling smugly, before many months are out.

The DLO was closed by a direction of the Secretary of State for the Environment under section 17(4) of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. No one who knows the Secretary of State's previous convictions will be surprised to learn that the direction was, and is, unlawful, and will in due course be deemed to be unlawful in the courts unless the Government—I do not believe that even

this Government can do this—can control the judiciary. It is unlawful in a number of respects, and I hope that Mr. Davies, the assistant secretary who signed the direction, is in the Civil Servants' Box. He may have many virtues, but judicial ignorance accompanies them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows better than most hon. Members that he should not refer to persons beyond the Bar or behind the Chair.

Mr. Sedgemore: I accept your admonition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I used to work in the precursor of the Department of the Environment and used to sit in that Box advising Ministers. I will leave the Minister to ponder on the sad judicial fate that awaits him.

I ask the House to bear in mind the Secretary of State's sad history in the courts, because that history is about to be repeated. It makes any godfather in the Italian Mafia appear positively respectable. In 1985, the annus mirabilis of this law-breaking Secretary of State, he acted unlawfully, according to the courts, in the Severn bridge toll case, in the GLC lorry ban case and in the London Regional Transport levy case. In the GLC case, the High Court judge described the Secretary of State's actions as "unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper". In another case, Mr. Justice McNeill, in the High Court, described the Secretary of State's actions as, "unreasonable, irrational, unlawful". That is what we shall find in the case of the closure of Hackney's DLO.

When the Secretary of State was at the Department of Transport, his actions were deemed unlawful in no fewer than seven out of 11 cases for judicial review. In December 1986 the Secretary of State had the temerity to come before the House and introduce amending legislation that involved the unlawful expenditure of billions of pounds in relation to the rate support grant. If ever there has been a Secretary of State who has affronted the constitution and the judicial position, it is the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). He, like the Under-Secretary of State, should lose his job if the Government believe in integrity.

For the moment, it is 600 workers in Hackney who will lose their jobs while the Secretary of State retains his. I understand that 78 per cent. of the 600 are local and that 45 per cent. come from the ethnic minorities. Their jobs will be picked up by privateers, price fixers and jerrybuilders in the private sector. The Minister should explain why he wants to help profiteers, price fixers and jerrybuilders in the private sector as opposed to local people in Hackney.

There are one or two ironies about the Government's decision. First, the direct labour organisation that is to be closed is a profitable enterprise. In the jargon of the Minister, it produces a first-class product. It meets with the wholehearted approval of its customers, who are the tenants who inhabit the 45,000 council properties in Hackney. Even worse from the Minister's point of view is the irony that the movement from losses of £5 million over two years to profit in the succeeding years make it a paradigm for Thatcherism. Why is this paradigm for Thatcherism—a loss-making organisation that has become a profit-making firm—being closed at a time when it is doing everything that the Government want it to do?

The Minister may smile, frown or laugh, and so may the Government Whip, but there has been an admission from councillor Joe Lobenstein—admittedly he is not a very bright councillor, but he is a fairly amiable person—that the organisation has become profitable. He claims that that is a result of Mrs. Thatcher's policies. Joe Lobenstein is the leader of the Conservative group at Hackney, which is a group of two or three. If the Prime Minister has taken action to make the organisation profitable, or has made the council take that action, why has the Minister chosen this moment to close it?

It is ironic that the Minister is seeking to wreck the best trained work force in the building industry of any company, public or private, in Great Britain. Everyone is astonished at Hackney's training scheme. Everyone, except an ungracious and uncivilised Minister, praises it. No one can believe that it is possible to have a building industry in which 200 trainees are employed and work actively on the production or improvement of homes. These trainees have produced some of the best results that anyone can remember in recent years in local government. I defy the Minister to tell the House that the schemes that I am about to mention, which have been built largely by the 200 trainees, are anything other than excellent and fully approved by the tenants who live in the accommodation.

I refer especially to the building of Powell house in 1983. In 1984 there was the building of the Broadway market. The second phase of the Stonebridge estate was built in 1985. The Lauriston road project was built in 1986. The Stonebridge park scheme in the Lea View estate was given an extraordinary reception the length and breadth of the land. It has received universal acclaim. What will the Minister say about that? Will he chose to close his eyes and adopt some myopic Nelsonian stance? Will he choose to look through the wrong end of the telescope and claim to see nothing? The irony is that the Minister claims that he wants to save money, but the truth is that the ratepayers of Hackney will lose vast quantities of money.

In the past three years the direct labour organisation of the borough has made £500,000 in profit. That is not my main argument in its favour. The cost of closing the direct labour organisation and the extra cost of completing the projects will be something like £8·5 million. The Minister should consider that extremely carefully, because if he does not do so, the High Court of Justice will and he will get his just deserts. The figure of £8·5 million is a conservative estimate of the price of retendering some £23 million of work—which will be outstanding on the date that the Minister has said the direct labour organisation can no longer function—together with the cost of closure.

I first came across the Minister when I was a councillor on the London borough of Wandsworth. I know about his pontifical ignorance and his complete lack of knowledge of what goes on in the building industry. If the Minister seeks to close the direct labour organisation, give it a year to shut up, and leave it with £23 million of work outstanding, does he not understand—he should because I believe that he has connections with the building industry—how the price fixing works when retendering takes place? Does he not understand how a cartel in the building industry operates? Does he not understand how monopolistic profits are squeezed out of organisations such as Hackney borough council and will continue to be squeezed out because of the stupid, silly, awful way in which the Minister and his colleagues have gone about this matter? They have no case. If the Minister does not understand

[Mr. Sedgemore]

that fact it will certainly be understood in the High Court because it is not amused by Ministers who are prepared to pour £8·5 million of public money down the drain.

The Department of the Environment asked for a special report from the London borough of Hackney. I shall not comment on it because it is too long and complicated to go through. Since that report was given to the Department in 1986 it has never—to its eternal shame—questioned the borough about the contents of the report. Why? It has ignored the trend from loss to profit. Why? It has ignored the fundamental reorganisation that has taken place—the reorganisation of working practices and managerial structures—the doubling in profitability, and the changes in industrial relations. Why?

When I worked for the precursors of the Ministers for Housing and for Local Government it was axiomatic that Ministers and civil servants tried to help local government. Now it seems to be some type of bloody warfare. The tenants are on the receiving end of absurd diktats from Whitehall. Why did the Department of the Environment and its Ministers not discuss some of the matters with the borough? If they believe that they have powerful, overwhelming arguments in their favour, why did they not bring them to the fore? There could have been some sensible, rational discussion. Why has reason left the Department since the Government took office in 1979?

One of the answers is again provided by Tory Joe of the borough of Hackney. He gives the game away and tells us why the Minister is acting thus. In the *Hackney Gazette and North London Advertiser* of 15 April 1988 Tory Joe said:

"When I was first elected to the Council of the old borough of Stoke Newington in 1962, I argued that building work should be put out to private tender. Now 26 years later, I have achieved my aim."

A 26-year-old vendetta has been waged by a rather ageing, pathetic councillor. That is backed up by another vendetta—the ministerial vendetta. The Minister is as aware as every other Government Minister that the building industry is a major contributor to Conservative party funds. That has, sadly, damaged the integrity of this country's constitution.

Many hon. Members will recall what happened over Cementation and the things that went wrong in very high places. That was a shabby act. The Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister have both acted shabbily as well. I do not mind if the Minister pours £37,000 plus of taxpayers' money down the drain. However, I object to the Minister pouring down the drain £8·5 million of the money belonging to the people living in the poorest borough in the United Kingdom according to the DOE's own indices. It is a public scandal that the Minister is prepared to take and waste their money. Yes, the Prime Minister always says that it is the people's money. Why is the Minister wasting the people's money, our money?

The Minister could not find his way to the London borough of Hackney if he tried. Since there have been ministerial changes in the Department of the Environment the visits have stopped. We used to have some helpful visits from Ministers in the past. However, we get no helpful visits from the Ministers who have taken over.

There appear to be no depths which the Minister will not plumb on the issue of privatisation. There is virtually no tactic to which he will not aspire, no legal or moral calumny in which he will not engage. Under the Minister, local government has become the pits. There is no longer any financial propriety or any sensible local democracy with local decision taking.

I want to make one final serious point to the Minister. The Minister provided a written reply to the hon. member for Pembroke in which he said:

"The borough claimed to have made a surplus on its major new works account in 1985-86 following losses of £3·2 million in 1983-84 and £1·75 million in 1984-85. My right hon. Friend is now satisfied, however, that the claimed surplus is spurious."—[*Official Report*, 31 March, 1988; Vol. 130, c. *719-720.]*

I do not know whether some clever, debating academic from Oxford university has joined the Department of the Environment and thought up using the word "spurious" or whether it was a Minister. However, what does the Minister mean by spurious? I take it to mean false.

I showed the written reply to one or two hon. Members and asked them what they thought the Minister was getting at. I also spoke to some officers of the London borough of Hackney. I was told that they thought that the Minister was claiming that the accounts submitted were dishonest and that the books had been cooked. I am certain that if the Minister has any understanding of the English language he will be aware that many people will have read the reply in that way. I am surprised that answers now appear which seem to suggest that respectable officers with integrity cooked the books or behaved dishonestly.

I do not want to go through the accounts of that period. I am not an accountant, but I am an economist and I understand them pretty well. However, I spoke to the chief executive of the London borough of Hackney and put my points to her. I also spoke to the director of finance and put my points to him. I spoke also to the building manager, Mr. Pat Quinn, about this allegation and to Miss Babcoe the accountant who is now going through the books and revising the profits down, but who still insists that there are profits.

Perhaps the most interesting of those people was Miss Babcoe. She told me that she was going through the books although she had not prepared the original accounts. She said that if she had wanted to cook the books, she could have done a much better job than was alleged to have been done.

There is no question but that Hackney had produced the books as it saw fit and proper with a due regard for the truth of the figures. However, the claim that the figures are spurious shocked me because there is no conceivable way in which the Minister could make that claim as he cannot have seen enough of the books to decide properly. I was further shocked by the fact that the district auditor is looking into the accounts of the period and he must decide in a judicial capacity whether he thinks the figures are spurious. That is a heavy handed way of trying to intimidate the district auditor who is trying to act in a judicial capacity. That is a major scandal which requires answering by the civil servants at the DOE and by the Minister.

The district auditor is a quasi-judicial figure. He is not employed by the Department of the Environment, although the Department may pay his salary. To try to intervene and virtually force the district auditor to declare

figures to be other than they are is only the kind of government that we have come to expect from this Minister.

I do not expect the Minister to stand up and behave in a sensible, proper, responsible fashion, and say that he is prepared to reconsider. I merely warn him that the courts of this country may do what the Executive will not.

3.10 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I assume that the hon. Lady has the consent of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and the Minister.

Ms. Abbott: On the night of the general election last year, the Prime Minister said:

"We must now turn our attention to the inner cities."

She has indeed. She has done so rather in the way that Hitler turned his Luftwaffe on the inner cities. The purpose and content of the attention that she has kindly paid us over the past 12 months has been to devastate our communities, and the announcement of the abolition of our direct labour organisation is part of that pattern.

I want to concentrate on three main points. The first is the effect of the abolition of the DLO on tenants. Unlike the Minister, who has sat and giggled and yawned his way through the entire debate, I have first-hand knowledge of the housing problems of the people of Hackney. My caseload at my weekly surgeries is three quarters composed of housing problems, and I know the misery, grief and rage that are caused by problems with repairs and improvements to estates. There is no doubt that the abolition of the DLO will lead to a sharp decline in the service to tenants.

Some improvement schemes may have to be curtailed, and the quality of work will undoubtedly fall. Such estates as the Lea View estate, an award-winning estate in my constituency, illustrate the kind of work that the Minister wants to bring to an end. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) said, the abolition will cost Hackney £8·5 million—money that could be better spend on building and repairing homes for the thousands in my constituency who experience appalling housing conditions. When the Minister has stopped laughing, he should think on that.

My second point concerns the loss of jobs. I stress that I am talking about an area where the official unemployment rate for adult males is one in four, and it is much higher among young black people and young people generally. It is in the context of that terrible unemployment rate that the Minister proposes to cut 600 jobs at a stroke—jobs that are now done largely by local people, many of them black. Will those people get the jobs from the contractors that he wishes to bring in?

Finally, let me ask the Minister why he is bringing forward the measure. As has been explained, the profitability of the DLO has risen and is rising. It is efficient; it has extremely high standards; it has done award-winning work. It is our contention that the Minister's real reason for attacking our DLO is to help his friends such as McAlpine and Wimpey—major contributors to Tory party funds. If the Government want to help their friends in the building trade, why do they not invest in housing? Why smash up our DLO?

The announcement is of no help whatever and it will not contribute an iota to the terrible, pressing, tragic housing crisis in Hackney. It is motivated not by the facts, but by mindless political spite. The wrecking nature of the announcement, and the detrimental effect that it will have on employment and housing standards, illustrate the real nature of the Prime Minister's project for the inner cities.

The announcement has no basis in any analysis of the facts. It has everything to do with the most squalid and mean party politics. It will be of no help to my constituents. All that it will do is push the terrible housing and unemployment problems of Hackney into a further downward spiral. I ask the Minister, even at this late stage, to reconsider his decision and to withdraw his announcement.

3.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I have been left with four minutes in which to reply to the debate, which has been notable for extravagant and abusive language verging on the hysterical. It has included attacks on the integrity not only of myself but of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I hope that inner-city issues will be addressed with rather more seriousness and gravity than has been used by the hon. Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott).

I do not know whether it galls the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch that he was not on Wandsworth council at the same time as I was. Yesterday marked the 10th anniversary of the Conservatives taking control of that council. I remind him that, when the Conservative party took over the council, it took over an inefficient direct labour organisation that has now been reformed. We now have a much more efficient construction service working for the people of Wandsworth. I shall not dwell further on the issues of Wandsworth, but perhaps that is one of the reasons why the hon. Gentleman is so steamed up this afternoon.

The debate has given me the opportunity to explain the background to part III of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which confers on the Secretary of State the powers that he has used in this instance. It is not often that the topic is fully discussed and, therefore, it is not often that the House is given a clear picture of the way in which policy has developed and, in particular, of the degree of restraint that has been exercised by the Secretary of State since the Local Government, Planning and Land Act came into force.

Part III of the 1980 Act governs the operation of local authority building and maintenance direct labour organisations. In broad terms, DLOs are required to compete for most of the work that they carry out. They must make a 5 per cent. return on the capital that they employ. When DLOs fail to meet the required rate of return, the legislation empowers my right hon. Friend to ask authorities to provide a special report on the failure. If he is not satisfied that the authority is taking adequate steps to put matters right, my right hon. Friend is empowered to order the closure of the DLO.

In the first six years of operation of the legislation, DLOs recorded over 600 failures to meet the 5 per cent. rate of return. My right hon. Friend and his predecessors are constantly accused of taking every opportunity to

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

attack direct labour organisations. The facts, however, speak for themselves. During that entire period, only 20 special reports have been requested. In most cases, the Secretary of State concluded that, in the light of the explanations provided, he should allow the DLOs to continue in operation. In one case—that of Newham—he has, in effect, agreed with the authority's own decision that the DLO in question was incapable of operating profitably, and issued a closure notice accordingly.

In only three cases—Haringey, Lambeth and Hackney—has the Secretary of State issued a closure notice in opposition to the views of the authority concerned. In those cases, he did so for good reasons.

The four closure directions were made following losses that totalled over £15 million. They are massive losses by any standard, made possible only by doctrinaire insistence on providing what are quite simply subsidies paid with ratepayers' money. If the government were to provide subsidies on that scale for a few loss-making private builders, one can only too readily imagine the outbursts of righteous indignation that would be forthcoming from the Opposition.

The only unreasonable thing to do with organisations of that degree of inefficiency is to let them carry on acting as a drain on the public purse. Opposition Members dutifully rehearse the litany of reasons why all is not as it seems, and why, despite the obvious case for closure, even the most appallingly mismanaged DLOs should indeed be let of the hook.

The hon. Gentleman could have referred to the Arden report, which was a voluminous report into inefficiency in Hackney. Before he criticises my right hon. Friend, I remind him that he helped to set it up. Perhaps he should have regard——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 April 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Roc Sandford

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis as to what costs were incurred by the Metropolitan police in bringing charges relating to the possession of drugs against Mr. Roc Sandford.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Mr. Roc Sandford was charged with possession of controlled drugs, was tried and subsequently acquitted at the Crown court in 1985. He was initially awarded £15,000 costs against the police. A further £4,000 costs and £10,000 damages have since been awarded by the Metropolitan police in an out-of-court settlement. Metropolitan police budgeting arrangements have been changed since that time and so it is not now possible to assess accurately the cost of the operation.

Charity Commissioners

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the powers and functions of the Charity Commissioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received a number of representations from charitable organisations and others broadly in support of the Woodfield report's recommendations for strengthening the powers of the Charity Commissioners, and altering the scope and balance of their work.

Drugs Cases

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the number of cases involving charges of drugs possession made by his officers in which these charges have been dropped in the wake of allegations of wrongful arrest, false imprisonment or malicious prosecution brought against the police, and on the amount of damages paid in each case; and if he will name the stations involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Asylum

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants for visitors' visas subsequently applied for asylum in each of the last five years; of which countries the applicants were nationals; and how many applications were successful.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not available.

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the regional emergency committees will be activated during the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link, due to take place in September and October 1988; whether he will describe liaison arrangements between his Department and the Association of Chief Police Officers through the Police War Duties Committee in relation to these exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Officials have discussed the arrangements for these exercises with chief officers of police. It is a matter for individual chief officers to determine whether, and to what extent, their forces should participate. The question of participation by regional emergency committees is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Health Lottery

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the LOTO consultancy seeking amendment of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 to permit the operation of a health lottery.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Snaresbrook (Court Building)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his plans are for the future of the temporary court building at Snaresbrook, in London.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The six Crown court court rooms now being constructed at Snaresbrook are due to come into operation later this year. Planning permission for such use has been granted by the local planning authority for five years from the date of occupation.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations has he received about the need for more secure conditions in bail hostels in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 15 April 1988]:* From time to time, probation service organisations such as the National Association of Probation Officers and the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, and individual chief probation officers have made representations that the staffing levels at some approved probation/bail hostels should be increased to ensure the safety of hostel staff and a working party has been established to look into this matter.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Housing Bill

31. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners,

what representations the Church Commissioners have received about the implications for their investment policy of the Housing Bill.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have not received any representations.

ENERGY

Child Care

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday and/or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has no child care provision and has no plans to introduce any.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to invite United States companies to build nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department is not involved in these exercises.

Energy Disconnections

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his Department's estimate of the number of disconnections for non-payment of bills in respect of *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88.

Mr. Parkinson: This is a matter for the industries concerned. I have asked the chairmen of the Electricity Council and British Gas plc to write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Oil and Gas

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will publish his next report on oil and gas developments in the United Kingdom, the "Brown Book".

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend has today published the latest edition of the Brown Book, and has arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office. The report gives a detailed account of oil and gas development during 1987.

PRIME MINISTER

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Prime Minister whether she intends to participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link, due to take place in September and October 1988; whether it is intended to activate the Cabinet Office Briefing Room, COBRA, and transition-to-war headquarters PINDAR; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The military home defence exercises planned for September and October 1988 are district field training exercises, each under the independent command of the appropriate general officer commanding. The questions of Ministerial participation and of the involvement of central crisis management machinery do not arise.

Middle East (International Conference)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 19 April on the middle east to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), *Official Report*, column 672, whether she will make it her policy to encourage discussions between Israel and Governments other than that of Jordan within the framework of an international conference; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. In our view an international conference would be open to the Governments of Israel and neighbouring states, to Palestinian representatives and to the Five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council.

Nuclear Weapons Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 24 March, *Official Report*, column 162, (1) whether there has been any modernisation of the capability of any United States nuclear warheads and associated weapons systems stationed in the United Kingdom since 1979;

(2) what was the most recent decision on modernisation of nuclear warheads affecting non-strategic weapons systems in service with British forces;

(3) pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 24 March, *Official Report*, column 162, what was the most recent modernisation of nuclear warheads affecting non-strategic weapons systems in service with British forces.

The Prime Minister: Consistent with the policy of successive Governments I am unable to confirm or deny the presence of United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom. As with its conventional weapons systems, the process of in-service modification of NATO's existing nuclear weapons systems is a continuous one. Since this Government came into office in 1979, no decisions have been taken to introduce new sub-strategic nuclear warheads or nuclear capable systems into service with British forces. Ground-launched cruise missiles have been deployed in the United Kingdom since 1983, but otherwise no new United States nuclear capable systems have been stationed in the United Kingdom since 1979.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Medical Research Council

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has received from the Medical Research Council for future research into *(a)* major psychiatric disorders and *(b)* schizophrenia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has received no such proposals. It is for the Medical Research Council to determine its priorities for research from within the annual grant in aid which it receives from the Department's science budget.

Dental School, Edinburgh

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates he has of the cost of developing a new dental school in Edinburgh in the event of the University Grants Committee working party's proposals to close Dundee's dental hospital going ahead.

Mr. Jackson: Current plans envisage a replacement dental hospital in Edinburgh; there are no present plans for a new dental school within the university. The University Grants Committee, in consultation with relevant Government Departments, is considering the implications of the dental review working party's proposals.

Student Unions (Ultra Vires Payments)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many prosecutions have been undertaken in respect of ultra vires payments by student unions in each year since 1970;

(2) what information he has as to police investigations of ultra vires payments by student unions in each year since 1970.

Mr. Jackson: The criminal courts would be involved in relation to ultra vires payments only to the extent that a criminal offence might also have been committed. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary does not hold information centrally on prosecutions or police investigations in sufficient detail to identify any involving student unions or their officers.

Inner London Parents (Ballot)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to the answer by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 19 April, *Official Report*, column *669*, on what information he based his statement that the Inner London parents' ballot was not a ballot of all Inner London education authority parents.

Mr. Dunn: My statement reflected the fact that the ballot gave only one vote to couples with a single child attending an ILEA school, and gave no vote to those parents in the Inner London education authority area who, perhaps because of dissatisfaction with ILEA, have chosen for their children either a school maintained by another authority, or an independent school.

Grant Maintained Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the selection procedure to be adopted for grant-maintained schools which may be formed after the enactment of the Education Reform Bill, particularly when the number of applications for entry exceeds the standard number.

Mr. Dunn: A school which applies to my right hon. Friend for grant-maintained status will have to provide information on its physical capacity and state the arrangements it proposes to adopt in respect of the admission of pupils if the application is approved. The articles of government of each grant-maintained school, which will be made by my right hon. Friend, will set out the school's admission policy, will provide for appeals against decisions on admissions, and will provide for details of the admissions arrangements to be published each year. Admissions arrangements must include the criteria the governors would use in deciding among applicants if the school was oversubscribed. If the school's admissions arrangements when it was a local authority school did not allow for the selection of pupil by reference to ability or aptitude, the prohibition on such selection criteria will apply at the date of the school's transfer to grant-maintained status. Other criteria for deciding priorities might refer, for example, to the distance of an applicant's home from the school, or to the presence of a brother or sister in the school.

Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates have been made of the number of teachers needed in each subject at the secondary level to ensure that each school will have all qualified staff needed to teach all subjects in the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 11 January, at column 53.

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the expenditure per pupil for each of the years from 1976 to 1982 in Kirklees metropolitan council area.

Mr. Dunn: The net institutional recurrent expenditure per pupil by Kirklees local education authority in primary and secondary schools in the years 1975-76 to 1982-83 is set out in the table.

Net institutional recurrent expenditure covers the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.

Expenditure per pupil in Kirklees 1976 to 1982

	Primary	*Secondary*
1975-76	240	360
1976-77	270	390

	Primary	Secondary
1977-78	290	420
1978-79	330	475
1979-80	390	545
1980-81	500	690
1981-82	590	780
1982-83	650	855

Note:—All figures are in cash terms.

Land Registry

Mr. Teddy Taylor To ask the Attorney-General what information he has on the problems faced by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Giles of 39 Napier avenue, Southend, as a result of the Land Registry's delay in responding to a request for deeds for that property, Title No. EX 354786; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The application for the registration of the lease of this property was lodged at the Land Registry on 15 July 1987. On 14 April 1988 the registry received a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Giles' solicitors inquiring about progress and stating that the property had been sold. The application was completed on 22 April.

Child Care

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General what child care provision *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Lord Chancellor's Department provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday and/or after school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

The Attorney-General: *(a)* None. Only seven of the 19 officials in the Law Officers' Department have children of pre-school or school age and there is no demand for child provision.

(b) None. The great majority of the 450 offices of the Lord Chancellor's Department have fewer than 30 staff which is too few to support local day care schemes. However, where there is sufficient demand for child care, practical advice and support are available to members of staff who wish to establish child care schemes, and requests for modest financial assistance to help establish such schemes will be considered.

CIVIL SERVICE

Crown Immunity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will introduce legislation to bring Crown immunity in England and Wales into line with the formulation of the rule of construction established for Scottish courts by the decision in the case of Lord Advocate on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence *v.* Strathclyde regional council and *v.* Dumbarton district council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Government have decided to appeal against the decision of the Court of Session to the House of Lords. It would be inappropriate to consider action in advance of that appeal.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Drugs (Illegal Imports)

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of seizures of illegally imported drugs, for the last year for which information is available, come from *(a)* EEC countries and *(b)* the rest of the world.

Mr. Lilley: The last year for which definitive information is available is 1986. The proportions were as follows:

Drug	From or via other EC countries per cent.	From the rest of the world per cent.
Heroin	13·3	86·7
Cocaine	50·2	49·8
Cannabis resin	64·6	35·4
Cannabis (herbal)	8·3	91·7
Amphetamines	100	—

War Loan

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will enter in the *Official Report*, in tabular form, for 3½ per cent. war loan, information showing the numbers of individuals with holdings of up to *(a)* £1,000, *(b)* £2,000, *(c)* £4,000, *(d)* £5,000 and *(e)* £5,000 to £10,000; and within these categories if he will give a breakdown of how long this stock has been held.

Mr. Lilley: I regret this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Foreign Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the total costs incurred by his Department on foreign travel during the financial year 1987-88 identified by *(a)* ministerial travel and *(b)* travel abroad by civil servants.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* In 1987-88 the total travel and subsistence costs of foreign trips by Ministers and their private secretaries was £19,751. The cost of foreign travel by other civil servants was £464,189.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South West African-Namibia

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list United Kingdom contributions to South West African-Namibian development through national, Commonwealth or European Community action in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross bilateral aid and the estimated British share of Commonwealth—Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation—aid to Namibia since 1983 have been as follows:

£'000

	1983	1984	1985	1986
Gross bilateral aid	279	313	605	733
Estimated United Kingdom share of Commonwealth aid[1]	66	72	91	105

Figures for 1987 are not yet available.
[1] Figures cover the period July/June.

Between 1979 and 1986 the EC provided 9·9 mecu—United Kingdom share equivalent to about £1·4 million—but no annual breakdown of expenditure is available.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current development projects in South West Africa-Namibia for which United Kingdom national, Commonwealth or European Community assistance is given; what is the value of that assistance; and if he will specify the means or agencies through which assistance is channelled.

Mr. Chris Patten: The bulk of our bilateral programme and all assistance through the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation is devoted to educational activities outside Namibia. Within the country we are currently supporting the following projects:

	Estimated expenditure 1988-89
In-service teacher training project	15,500
Books presentations to various schools/colleges	10,000
Classroom furniture for Ongula Metanga primary school	1,900
Textbooks for Katatura School	1,250
Textbooks for Windhoek legal advice centre	1,500
Salaries for staff at Odibo Clinic	5,500

Assistance to the first project is channelled through the Namibia Christian Exchange; the remainder through the British embassy and the British Council in South Africa.

The EC is providing some 500,000 ecu — United Kingdom share £73,000 — for community centres, support for public awareness and vocational training in Namibia.

Ethiopia

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is currently being given by the British Government to Ethiopia to alleviate the problems of drought, locust and famine in that country.

Mr. Chris Patten: British commitments for famine relief in Ethiopia, through bilateral and European Community channels, total over £45 million since the beginning of 1987. This includes the cost of 94,500 tonnes of bilateral food aid to help in meeting needs during 1988 and £3 million to support airlift operations by the office of the United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator. It also includes assistance with transport, port handling equipment, medicines and grain storage.

We are also assisting with rehabilitation following the 1984-85 famine, including a £1·2 million well rehabilitation project in Welo region.

Since the beginning of 1987 we have provided over £650,000 for emergency assistance in Ethiopia through the Desert Locust Control Organisation for Eastern Africa.

AIDS

Mr. Rhodes James: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether British expertise and experience in screening blood for the HIV will be made available to African states under the overseas development aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: Screened blood is a priority for all national AIDS control programmes. These are being established in African countries and elsewhere under the technical guidance of the World Health Organisation's global programme on AIDS. British expertise is being used to develop many of these programmes. Britain has committed over £12 million so far from the overseas aid programme in support of this work.

British blood experts are also helping to develop a global initiative, launched by the World Health Organisation, to safeguard blood against HIV and other infections.

Zambia

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is this assessment of Zambia's response to International Monetary Fund demands in relation to the management of the Zambian economy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am disappointed that Zambia has not so far been able to reach agreement with the International Monetary Fund on an appropriate economic reform programme. We believe such a programme to be essential to economic recovery in Zambia.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made, or intends to make, to Zambia in support of International Monetary Fund pressure for Zambia's budget deficit to be reduced to 5 per cent. of gross domestic product.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are in regular contact with the Zambian Government and have encouraged them to reach agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The technical details are for the International Monetary Fund and the Zambians to settle.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available to him, in formulating aid policy, about the economic situation in Zambia.

Mr. Chris Patten: A wide range of economic information is available to me on Zambia from both international and local sources.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list United Kingdom contributions to Zambian development through national, Commonwealth and European Community action in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross bilateral aid and the estimated British share of Commonwealth and European Community aid to Zambia since 1983 is as follows:

£'000

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Gross bilateral aid	15,485	32,901	25,552	35,366
Estimated United Kingdom share of EC aid	1,290	4,140	5,220	2,500

	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Estimated United Kingdom share of Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation expenditure for Zambia	48	71	123	160

Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why £30 million of British aid to Zambia has been frozen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: In December 1986 Her Majesty's Government indicated that some £30 million could be made available to Zambia in the calendar year 1987 in the form of programme aid, provided that agreement could be reached between Zambia and the IMF on an appropriate programme of economic reform. No such agreement was reached and none of the finance was released.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current development projects in Zambia for which United Kingdom national, Commonwealth and European Community assistance had been agreed, the value of that assistance, and for which of these projects aid has been frozen.

Mr. Chris Patten: Under the bilateral aid programme for Zambia, Britain is currently financing two rural development schemes at a total cost of some £7·6 million. In addition, we expect to disburse about £12 million in 1988-89 on a range of technical co-operation activities including the provision of expert personnel; training for Zambians in the United Kingdom; consultancies; and a contribution to the World Health Organisation/ Government of Zambia medium term AIDS control plan.

Britain contributes 30 per cent. of the expenditure of the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation which currently runs some 53 projects in Zambia mainly involving the provision of experts and training at an estimated cost of £1·6 million.

Current development projects in Zambia financed by the european Community under the second and third Lome conventions are as follows:

Title	mecu Allocation
Agricultural Sector Import Programme	21·800
Rehabilitation copper and cobalt mining industry (II)	28·000
Interest rate subsidy, NCCM Chingola Mine	6·816
Tsetse and trypanosomiasis control programme	5·000
Maize development	5·550
Rural township water supply	5·200
Rice development	4·000
Rural health centres	2·000
First Microprojects Programme	2·120
Vaccine production project	3·000
Development Bank of Zambia interest rate subsidy	1·724
Miscellaneous studies	1·079
Miscellaneous regional training activities	2·244
Agricultural sector import programme	18·200
Development Bank of Zambia	10·500
Copperbelt smallholder development	12·000
Centre for accounting studies	4·000
Maths and Science Teacher education	3·500
Reintegration of nationals	0·300

None of the development activities described above has been frozen.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment is available to him of Zambia's debt repayment arrears; and to which countries repayment has not been made.

Mr. Chris Patten: Zambia's arrears on repayments of aid loans to the United Kingdom are currently £3·2 million. Arrears to the International Monetary Fund are SDR 421 million, and to the World Bank $82 million. No current figures are readily available on the extent of other arrears.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the effect on Zambia of the suspension of international aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: Some aid to Zambia, but by no means all, has been suspended. Project aid and technical cooperation from Britain and certain other donors are continuing. The reduction in flows of balance of payments aid to Zambia has coincided with a rise in Zambia's copper export earnings as a result of higher world prices and with decisions by the Zambians to reduce their payments of debt service. It is difficult to assess with precision the effects over time of these various offsetting changes.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his current assessment of shortages of food and other essentials in Zambia; and what are the implications for Her Majesty's Government's overseas aid effort.

Mr. Chris Patten According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the prospects for an above-average cereals harvest this year in Zambia are very good. However, there are continuing shortages of staple commodities and other essentials available for sale. In the current circumstances, we shall continue to concentrate our aid programme to Zambia on the provision of technical co-operation in key areas and on the integrated rural development schemes in the northern and central provinces.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment is available to him on the level of economic growth in Zambia in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimated growth in Zambia's gross domestic product since 1983 is as follows:

percentage growth rate in GDP

	growth
1984	−0·4
1985	3·4
1986	2·0
1987	2·5

Source: IMF staff papers.

Ethiopia

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimates he now has of crop failure in Ethiopia and of that country's emergency needs for grain and supplies of food; how far those needs are being met by donor countries; and how far grain and supplies of food will be available in the areas where they are most needed.

Mr. Chris Patten: A Food and Agriculture Organisation assessment mission in December 1987 estimated tht Eritrea had suffered an 80 per cent. main crop failure. In Tigre and Welo regions crop failure was estimated to be over 70 per cent, and in Hararghe 30 per cent.; while parts of other regions, in particular north-eastern Shewa and eastern Gonder, were also seriously affected. Ethiopia's total additional food requirement until the end of 1988 was set at 1·3 million tonnes. Following poor secondary "belg" rains in Welo and northern Shewa in February-March 1988, this overall requirement is likely to be increased by up to 200,000 tonnes.

Donors have pledged over 1 million tonnes of food aid for 1988. Together with food pledged in 1987 but expected to be delivered in 1988, and carry-over stocks, this should be sufficient to meet Ethiopia's needs. However, the recent escalation of civil war in Eritrea and Tigre, and the Ethiopian Government's announcement that most expatriate relief workers must leave these regions, has brought distribution of food to those in need almost to a standstill. The world food programme is now recommending that donors delay food aid shipments due to congestion of the Ethiopian ports.

The situation is extremely serious and a major tragedy is likely if full-scale relief operations cannot be resumed soon. All parties to the conflict will bear a grave responsibility if this occurs. We have consistently called on all concerned to allow secure free passage for relief convoys.

WALES

Welsh College of Music and Drama

15. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what inspections of the Welsh college of music and drama have been made by Her Majesty's inspectors of education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The initial training course offered jointly by the Welsh college of music and drama and the South Glamorgan institute of higher education was inspected in autumn 1986 and spring 1987. A general inspection of the college took place between 29 February and 4 March this year.

South-East Wales

16. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution from the Welsh Development Agency and Cardiff Bay development corporation is being made to the promotion of south-east Wales as a financial services centre.

Mr. Peter Walker: The campaign I launched recently to promote south-east Wales as a financial services centre is being led by the Welsh Development Agency and backed by a consortium of six other bodies, including the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

The campaign is planned to run for two years initially. The WDA proposes to contribute a maximum of £500,000 a year from within its existing marketing budget. The development corporation plans a contribution of £25,000 in each year.

Rating Reform

17. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of the business community in Wales to discuss the proposed national non-domestic rate.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I have had frequent communications with representatives of the business community in Wales and have discussed many topics that are of mutual interest.

Water Charges

18. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, when he next meets the chairman of the Welsh water authority, he will discuss future water charges.

Mr. Grist: Yes. They will be included as part of our discussion of the authority's corporate plan.

Labour Statistics

19. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales, and if he will give the equivalent figures for the same date in 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 10 March 1988 the numbers of unemployed claimants in Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 7,696, 22,495 and 141,403 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

In-patient Treatment

20. **Mr. Alex Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are waiting for in-patient treatment for urgent and non-urgent cases in Powys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Thirty-two people were waiting for non-urgent in-patient treatment in NHS hospitals in Powys on 30 September 1987, a reduction of 45 per cent. on the previous year, and none were waiting for urgent treatment. I congratulate the Powys health authority on meeting its in-patient targets.

Sheep Movements

21. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the impact of the restrictions of sheep movements in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep in parts of north Wales following the Chernobyl accident have been successful in protecting public health and maintaining consumer confidence in lamb. £3·3 million has been paid to affected producers in Wales under schemes of compensation introduced in consultation with the farming unions.

Home Improvement (Grants and Loans)

22. **Mr. John:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the annual number of home improvement grants and home improvement loans in Wales at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Grist: In 1987 some 20,000 grants were completed at a cost in excess of £59 million. Information on home improvement loans is not collected by the Department.

Pontypool and District Hospital

23. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the possible closure of Pontypool and district hospital.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received no representations concerning the possible closure of Pontypool and district hospital.

Tree-planting Schemes

24. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress in initiatives and plans to encourage broadleaved tree-planting schemes in the Principality.

Mr. Peter Walker: The planting of broadleaves will be encouraged under the new woodland grant scheme, which provides substantially higher rates of grant for broadleaves than for conifers and a supplement for planting on better land. Planting of broadleaved trees by farmers will be further encouraged under the proposed farm woodland scheme.

Amenity tree planting is supported by grants from the Countryside Commission and a number of other sources.

Housing Lists

25. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were on local authority housing lists *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1987.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of people on housing waiting lists is not available centrally.

Flint Castle (Report)

26. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take in the light of the report entitled "Flint Castle and Environs: A Feasibility Study," commissioned by CADW, Delyn borough council and the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I welcome the report. We are currently considering with the various parties involved how best to proceed in the light of the consultants' findings.

Rating Reform

27. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what number and percentage of the total electors in the district council areas of *(a)* Preseli, Pembrokeshire, and *(b)* south Pembrokeshire currently pay domestic rates; and what estimate he has of the number and percentage of electors in each area who will pay the community charge.

Mr. Grist: My best estimate is that there are about 27,000 people in Preseli and 16,000 in south Pembrokeshire liable for domestic rates. This represents 51 per cent. of the electoral rolls in each district. Almost all adults will be liable for the community charge.

Concessionary Bus Fares

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the provision of concessionary bus fares for children arising out of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Transport Act 1985 gave local authorities the opportunity to review their concessionary fares schemes and to improve, modify or introduce schemes for certain groups including children. Some authorities have used these powers, but in most areas there has been no change.

Clwyd Area Health Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed as (i) ancillaries and (ii) professionals by Clwyd area health authority in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The number of whole-time equivalents at 30 September employed by Clwyd district health authority is given as follows:

	1979	*1987*
Ancillary staff	1,324	1,186
Professional and technical staff[1]	377	553

[1] Includes professions allied to medicine, scientific staff, technicians, pharmacists and opticians.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed by Clwyd area health authority family practitioner committee in 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Grist: The information, which relates to whole-time equivalents as at 30 September, is as follows:

	Number
1979	31·0
1987	34·6

Welsh Language

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many secondary schools in Wales teach Welsh as a second language; how many pupils are involved in each year group; and what percentage this is for each year group.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In September 1987, 196 secondary schools in Wales taught Welsh as a second language. The information by year group is as follows:

Year group	*Number of pupils*	*Percentage of year group*
I	22,496	69·4
II	21,277	63·0
III	17,362	49·1
IV	6,844	18·2
V	6,996	17·7
VI	640	3·0
Total	75,615	37·8

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary schools in Wales teach, wholly or partly in Welsh *(a)* two subjects, *(b)* three subjects, *(c)* four subjects, *(d)* five subjects and *(e)* more than five subjects.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many secondary schools in Wales teach wholly or partly in Welsh *(a)* two subjects, *(b)* three subjects, *(c)* four subjects, *(d)* five subjects and *(e)* more than five subjects.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information relating to September 1987 is as follows:

Number of subjects	*Number of schools*
2	—
3	7
4	1
5	2
More than 5	40

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary schools in Wales teach Welsh to all pupils either as the language of the home or a second language, giving the number and percentage of pupils in each case.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not collected centrally in the form requested. However, in September 1987, 1,018 primary schools taught Welsh to all pupils either as a second language or as a medium of instruction. These schools represented 122,140 pupils, about 47·5 per cent. of the total primary school population.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students are currently in training to teach *(a)* through the medium of Welsh at junior level, *(b)* through the medium of Welsh at secondary level, *(c)* Welsh as a second language in junior schools and *(d)* Welsh as a second language in secondary schools; and how many he estimates will be required to meet the needs of implementing the national curriculum's requirements in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1986 there were 213 students in Wales training to teach through the medium of Welsh at primary level and about 38 at secondary level. No information is held about the number of students training to teach Welsh as a second language, but in 1986, 53 students in training were pursuing Welsh as a main subject in bachelor of education courses and 16 were pursuing postgraduate training to teach Welsh in secondary schools. It is too early to make precise estimates of the number of teachers that will be required to meet the needs of implementing the national curriculum. Local education authorities will be expected to plan on the basis of incremental implementation of the national curriculum over a number of years within the framework of the present planned resources.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lebanon

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom citizens held as hostages in Lebanon.

Mr. Mellor: Her Majesty's embassy in Beirut is doing everything it reasonably can to obtain information there about the disappearance and present whereabouts of our hostages. We are in regular contact with middle eastern and other Governments who might be able to help. While we deeply sympathise with the hostages and share the anguish of their families, it is our firm policy not to make substantive concessions to kidnappers, because experience has shown that making deals leads to more hostage taking and places further lives at risk.

Christina Endrigkeit

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions with the West German Government over the implications for Euro-Arab relations of the investigative custody of Christina Endrigkeit.

Mrs. Chalker: No. I have nothing to add to the many statements we have made on these matters.

Vladimir Tufeld

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Government about their continued failure to grant an exit visa to Vladimir Tufeld of Moscow so that he can join his critically ill wife.

Mr. Mellor: We have made repeated representations to the Soviet authorities on behalf of Vladimir Tufeld, making clear my right hon. and learned Friend's personal interest and that of the Prime Minister, most recently on 21 April. My right hon. and learned Friend was able to meet Mr. Tufeld in February and to raise his case personally with Mr. Shevardnadze. The humanitarian grounds for his being given an exit visa are overwhelming and we hope the Soviet authorities will reconsider their decision.

South Africa

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific initiatives Her Majesty's Government have taken, alone or with other members of the United Nations, with regard to *(a)* apartheid in South Africa, *(b)* the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa, *(c)* the repeated violence in the territory of Angola, and *(d)* the funding of mercenary troops in Mozambique, over the past 12 months.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made frequent representations, both bilaterally and in concert with our European Community partners, on human rights abuses, including detentions without charge, and forced removals; restrictions on the media; the restrictions placed on 17 anti-apartheid organisations and individuals on 24 February; the implications of the Promotion of Orderly Internal Politics Bill; clemency for the Sharpeville six; the need to release Nelson Mandela and other political

prisoners, to unban the ANC and other political parties and to start a process of dialogue and negotiation with credible black leaders.

On Namibia, we have worked in support of Security Council resolution 601, empowering the Secretary General to negotiate a ceasefire leading to implementation of SCR 435. On Angola, in addition to voting for Security Council resolutions 602 and 606 which called for the immediate withdrawal of South African troops, we have used every available opportunity to impress upon the South African Government the need for them to contribute to a peaceful settlement. The South African Government are also well aware of our strong view that they should not support Renamo forces in Mozambique, directly or indirectly.

Young People (Exchange Visits)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any plans to increase the funding available for young people living in the United Kingdom to undertake Commonwealth and other international exchange visits; if he will take steps to ensure that the proposed Youth for Europe scheme maintains or increases opportunities for young people in Britain to undertake exchange visits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There are no plans to increase the available funds at present. Our aim is to ensure that any Youth for Europe programme complements the existing successful youth exchange programmes in the United Kingdom.

Brazil

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his Brazilian counterpart; if he will discuss with him Brazil's failure to sign the mutual protocol on the substances which deplete the ozone layer and the damage caused to it by the burning of the Amazonian forest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet the Foreign Minister of Brazil.

Ascension Island

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any further progress has been made in cleaning litter and empty beer cans from Ascension Island.

Mr. Eggar: Ascension Island Services is responsible for refuse collection on the island and ensures that refuse is collected on a regular basis. There are notices displayed around the island warning people that anyone caught dropping litter will be fined up to a maximum of £20. Also the Scouts carry out sponsored tidying-up campaigns from time to time.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the Government rates of pay and social welfare on St. Helena.

Mr. Eggar: The St. Helena Government set these pay rates. Rates of pay, with effect from 1 April 1988, range from £1,284 up to £9,012. There are a total of 62 salary points on the scale. Weekly social welfare rates range from £4·75 for a dependent child up to £32·50 for a family.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many dwellings have been completed on St. Helena in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: Government dwellings have been completed on St. Helena in each of the last five years as follows:

	Number
1983-84	12
1984-85	23
1985-86	11
1986-87	11
1987-88	0

In addition, planning approval for private dwellings are granted as follows:

	Number
1983	34
1984	67
1985	35
1986	50
1987	60

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many donkeys there are on Ascension Island; whose responsibility they are; and what are the areas that they are allowed to graze.

Mr. Eggar: It is estimated that there are about 60 donkeys on Ascension. They are protected under the Ascension Island ordinances and are the Administrator's responsibility. With the exception of the air base which is fenced off, the donkeys are free to graze on the island.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the reduction of feral cats on Ascension Island; and what estimate he can make of the remaining numbers.

Mr. Eggar: Ascension Island Services and the organisations based on Ascension have an on-going culling programme for all sectors of the island, with the assistance, as appropriate, of the police. These measures are considered to be effective and it is estimated that more than 150 cats were destroyed last year. It is not known how many cats remain on the island.

Fiji

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent talks he has had with Ministers from Fiji; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend had talks with the Prime Minister of Fiji on 29 March, covering various aspects of our relations. Ratu Mara spoke of his efforts to return Fiji to constitutional government. These have our full support.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state what representations he has received about the current status of United Kingdom military aid to Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: We have received one letter from a member of the public.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if military aid has been restored to Fiji; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A modest programme of military training will continue.

NAVTEX

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that EEC countries transmit NAVTEX navigational guidance information.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have been asked to reply.

Provision of NAVTEX, an international service for promulgation to ships of coastal navigational and meteorological and other safety information, is co-ordinated through the International Maritime Organisation-sponsored worldwide navigational warning service. Some European coasts already have the service, and further transmitting stations are planned.

SCOTLAND

Tributyl

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implications for fish farming of his research into anti-foulant tributyl.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following consideration of the results carried out by Government scientists the use of tributyltin-based compounds used to prevent the fouling of fish farm nets and cages is prohibited through regulations introduced last year. This has required the fish farming industry to consider alternative compounds as anti-foulants.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the publicity material about breast cancer screening which the Scottish Health Education Group is preparing will be ready.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The essential component of the breast cancer screening programme is that women in the age range 50 to 64 will receive a personal invitation to attend a centre for screening. The Scottish Health Education Group is collaborating with the national training centre for breast cancer screening in Edinburgh to devise a suitable letter of invitation and an information leaflet about breast cancer screening. The material will be available in June. The need for a national publicity campaign will be considered once all the screening centres are in operation.

Job losses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures of job losses caused by the removal or closure of American-owned factories in Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The estimated number of job losses in manufacturing units which were US-owned in 1979 with an employment of more than 10 in that year, and which are now closed, is 21,600.

Radioactive Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning investigations by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive of publicly owned land in Scotland to assess the suitability of sites for the development of a repository for the disposal of low and intermediate level radioactive waste; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are not aware of such investigations by Nirex in connection with its current work on identifying possible repository sites in Great Britain.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has about approaches made by landowners in Scotland to the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive with proposals for the use of land as potential sites for a nuclear waste disposal facility; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is not a matter for the Scottish Office. Such approaches would be made to Nirex, which is known to observe confidentiality on any approach by landowners.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the area of land approved for forestry grant-aid in each of the five years to 31 March 1987 and from 1 April 1987 to date in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Area of land (hectares)*
1983	34,419
1984	34,096
1985	33,267
1986	37,875
1987	65,935

The total area of land approved for planting in the period 1 April 1987 to 31 December 1987, the latest date to which figures are readily available, was 49,756 hectares.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the minimum payment of the community charge, including community water charge, would have been payable by pensioners on basic retirement pension income in the current financial year, for each district, island and regional authority; if he will express each sum payable as a percentage of the total community charge in that area; and if he will make a statement about the average proportion of the community charge which will have to be met by those on low incomes.

Mr. Ian Lang *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The information requested in respect of 1988-89 is set out in the table. All pensioners whose basic state pension is their only source of income, and whose capital does not exceed £3,000, will receive the maximum community charge rebate. In most cases they will qualify for income support. Income support rates already take account of the payment of the minimum contribution to rates and of water rates:

in 1989-90 they will be adjusted to take account of the introduction of the community charge in Scotland. Many people on low incomes will have their full charge covered.

Local authority area	*Personal community charge*	*Community water charge*	*Total liability*	*Maximum rebate*	*Amount payable*	*Amount payable as a percentage of total liability per cent.*
Borders						
Berwick	181	24	205	145	60	29
Ettrick and Lauderdale	183	24	207	147	60	29
Roxburgh	187	24	211	150	61	29
Tweeddale	181	24	205	145	60	29
Central						
Clackmannan	228	16	245	183	62	25
Falkirk	217	16	233	174	60	26
Stirling	253	16	270	203	67	25
Dumfries and Galloway						
Annandale and Eskdale	193	17	210	155	56	27
Nithsdale	193	17	210	155	56	27
Stewartry	193	17	210	155	56	27
Wigtown	186	17	203	149	54	27
Fife						
Dunfermline	230	17	247	184	63	26
Kirkcaldy	241	17	258	193	65	25
North East Fife	244	17	261	195	66	25
Grampian						
Aberdeen	192	28	220	154	66	30
Banff and Buchan	180	28	208	144	64	31
Gordon	178	28	206	143	64	31
Kincardine and Deeside	173	28	201	138	63	31
Moray	173	28	201	139	63	31
Highland						
Badenoch and Strathspey	181	20	201	144	56	28
Caithness	182	20	202	146	57	28
Inverness	183	20	204	147	57	28
Lochaber	194	20	214	155	59	28
Nairn	180	20	200	144	56	28
Ross and Cromarty	189	20	209	151	58	28
Skye and Lochalsh	179	20	200	143	56	28
Sutherland	174	20	195	140	55	28
Lothian						
East Lothian	311	20	331	249	82	25
Edinburgh	314	20	334	251	83	25
Midlothian	303	20	323	242	81	25
West Lothian	296	20	316	237	79	25
Strathclyde						
Argyll and Bute	256	17	274	205	69	25
Bearsden and Milngavie	265	17	283	212	70	25
Clydebank	249	17	267	199	67	25
Clydesdale	246	17	263	197	67	25
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	248	17	266	199	67	25
Cumnock and Doon Valley	239	17	256	191	65	25
Cunninghame	262	17	279	210	70	25
Dumbarton	264	17	281	211	70	25
East Kilbride	244	17	261	195	66	25
Eastwood	246	17	264	197	67	25
Glasgow	274	17	291	219	72	25
Hamilton	254	17	272	203	68	25
Inverclyde	246	17	263	196	67	25
Kilmarnock and Loudon	251	17	268	201	68	25
Kyle and Carrick	257	17	274	205	69	25
Monklands	249	17	266	199	67	25
Motherwell	244	17	261	195	66	25
Renfrew	255	17	273	204	68	25
Strathkelvin	249	17	266	199	67	25
Tayside						
Angus	226	19	245	181	64	26
Dundee	256	19	275	204	70	26

Local authority area	Personal community charge	Community water charge	Total liability	Maximum rebate	Amount payable	Amount payable as a percentage of total liability per cent.
Perth and Kinross	230	19	249	184	65	26
Orkney	79	28	107	63	44	41
Shetland	187	14	201	150	51	26
Western Isles	105	20	125	84	41	33
Scotland Total	246	19	266	197	68	26

Note: Figures may not add owing to rounding.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Schemes (Bonus Payments)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether the proposed bonus payment to be paid at the end of an adult training scheme placement will affect benefit entitlement or tax liability;

(2) who is to be responsible for funding the proposed bonus payment to be paid at the end of a placement on the adult training scheme;

(3) what is the proposed minimum and maximum level for the proposed bonus payment to be paid at the end of a placement on the adult training scheme;

(4) if the proposed bonus payment for participants leaving the adult training scheme will be available on all different elements of the programmes;

(5) if the proposed bonus payment for those leaving the adult training scheme will be paid to all leavers no matter how long they spend on the scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Training managers or providers of practical training placements in the new programme, employment training, may, if they wish and from their own resources, give participants a bonus on completion of their training or any part of their training. The amount and terms of any such payments will be entirely at the discretion of the training manager or provider. Where such a bonus relates exclusively to the completion of part or all of the training programme it will not be liable to income tax. Provided that the bonus is no more than £250 and the recipient has not received any other ad hoc payments in the same 52-week period, it will not be treated as income but as capital for the purposes of assessing entitlement to income support and housing benefit.

Jobcentres

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average rate of pay for vacancies currently notified to jobcentres.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Lost Working Days (Strikes)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days of work were lost through strikes in December 1987; what was the comparable figure in December 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in December 1987 is provisionally estimated as 55,000. The comparable figure for December 1978 is 542,000 lost working days.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed persons over the age of 50 years and out of work for more than one year, broken down by sex, are there in the travel-to-work areas of *(a)*Cambridgeshire, *(b)* Lincolnshire, *(c)* Norfolk, *(d)* Suffolk, *(e)* Bedfordshire, *(f)* Northamptonshire and *(g)* Leicestershire.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of male and female unemployed claimants aged over 50 years who have been unemployed for one year or more, at 14 January 1988 for the counties requested. Travel-to-work area boundaries are not conterminous with those of counties and a number of travel-to-work areas include parts of more than one county. This information is in the Library.

Unemployed Claimants—14 January 1988

County	Unemployed Claimants	
	Male	Female
Cambridgeshire	1,400	505
Lincolnshire	2,128	734
Norfolk	2,433	1,039
Suffolk	1,498	620
Bedfordshire	1,680	589
Northamptonshire	1,373	668
Leicestershire	3,140	933

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of change in unemployment levels in the last 12 months in the north-east.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 10 March 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the north-east (counties of Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear) had fallen in the year by 26,700 or nearly 15·3 per cent.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage fall in unemployment in each of the parliamentary constituencies in Lancashire since August 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants at 9 August 1984 and 10 March 1988, together with the percentage change, for each parliamentary constituency in the county of Lancashire. The figures are affected by seasonal factors and the change in the coverage of the count in March 1986.

Unemployed Claimants

Constituency	*August 1984*	*March 1988*	*Percentage change*
Blackburn	7,843	5,839	−25·6
Blackpool North	4,797	5,087	6·1
Blackpool South	4,707	5,435	15·5
Burnley	5,949	4,283	−28·0
Chorley	4,598	3,358	−27·0
Fylde	2,749	2,428	−11·7
Hyndburn	4,170	3,006	−27·9
Lancaster	3,484	2,722	−21·9
Morecambe and Lundesdale	3,468	3,849	11·0
Pendle	4,597	3,237	−29·6
Preston	7,619	6,085	−20·1
Ribble Valley	2,164	1,546	−28·6
Rossendale and Darwen	4,728	3,352	−29·1
South Ribble	4,626	3,228	−30·2
West Lancashire	7,0:9	5,565	−20·9
Wyre	3,807	3,138	−17·6

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Department of Employment will not be taking part in any of these military home defence exercises.

Elderly Men

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men aged between 60 and 65 years are *(a)* retired, *(b)* unemployed and *(c)* at work.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary results from the 1987 labour force survey are as shown in the table:

Men aged 60-64 inclusive
Great Britain—Spring 1987

	Thousands
(1) In paid employment	676
(2) Unemployed[1]	77
(3) Economically inactive	628
of which retired[2]	254

[1] Great Britain labour force definition.
[2] Those who said that they had not looked for work in the week before interview because they had retired.

Retail Prices Index Computer System

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the outcome of the review of the retail prices index computer system commissioned by the Department from the head of the Government statistical service.

Mr. Fowler: I have recently received a report from the head of the Government statistical service confirming that the index is being calculated correctly. I will today be placing in the Library of the House a copy of his report to me together with a further report of the investigations undertaken in the course of the review.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Income Support

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his estimates, broken down into claimant group, of the numbers of income support claimants who, in the event of a general increase of benefit levels in April 1989 of 4 per cent. will, at that date, as a result of 1988-89 transitional protection, receive *(a)* no benefit increase, *(b)* an increase of less than £1 and *(c)* an increase of less than 4 per cent.

Mr. Scott: In the event of a 4 per cent. increase in benefit levels in April 1989, an estimated 540,000 income support claimants would receive no benefit increase at uprating. An estimated 600,000 would receive an increase of less than 4 per cent. Information on the number who would receive an increase of less than £1 is not available.

Social Security (Changes)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will itemise the assumptions and detailed calculations he has made in reaching the conclusion that 54 per cent. of claimants under 25 years will gain in real terms as a result of changes resulting this month from the Social Security Act; and, in particular, if he will explain the assumption made as to the proportion of householders and non-householders within this claimant group.

Mr. Portillo: The structural effect of the Social Security Act 1986 for single claimants under 25 years and without children is given in table 8 of the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits". The assumptions are given in the explanotory notes to this publication.

The numbers of non-householders and householders in this category are 660,000 and 170,000, respectively.

Low-income Families

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish the low-income families' statistics based on the 1985 family expenditure survey.

Mr. Portillo: We intend to publish these statistics shortly.

Senile Dementia

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what research his Department is conducting into senile dementia; and what progress is being made in both retarding the onset of such dementia, and reducing its impact.

Mrs. Currie: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science, is the main Government-funded body for biomedical research in the United Kingdom and has a number of units looking at different aspects of senile dementia. The main clinical aims include treating any co-existing illnesses or disabilities which could accentuate the effects of dementia, and supporting and counselling families and other carers.

At present there is no treatment which is able to prevent, arrest or reverse senile dementia. We are paying

close attention to trials which are investigating the potential of Tetrahydroaminoacridine (THA) as a treatment.

The Department is not currently conducting research specifically into senile dementia although we are funding a special medical development about the evaluation of nursing homes for the elderly mentally ill which is relevant to sufferers of senile dementia.

Hospital Medical Staff

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, in tabular form, details by regional health authority and specialty of the numbers of senior registrars employed in the National Health Service;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form details by regional health authority and specialty of the numbers and grades of those authorised to perform surgical procedures excluding consultants, and senior registrars.

Mr. Newton: All clinical, medical and dental staff of health authorities are able to perform some surgical procedures. It is the responsibility of the consultant under whose care a patient is admitted to decide how far individual procedures may be delegated to junior staff under his supervision. Information on numbers of clinical staff in each region by specialty and grade, including senior registrars, is published annually in "Hospital Medical (Dental) Staff—England and Wales: Regional Tables". These are provided routinely to, and are available in, the Library. The latest available information is that for 30 September 1986.

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link, due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: There will be no participation by the Department of Health and Social Security in these exercises. There may be limited participation by the National Health Service but the details have yet to be finalised.

Single and Special Payments (Lewisham)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for single payments and special payments made before 1 April are waiting to be processed in each of his Department's offices serving the London borough of Lewisham; and what additional resources are being made available to deal with the outstanding applications.

Mr. Portillo: At close of business on 8 April 1988 the offices serving the London borough of Lewisham had single payment and additional requirement claims outstanding as shown in the following table. The figures are provisional and subject to revision.

Office	*Single Payments*	*Additional Requirements*
Lewisham	[1]6,130	[1]4,500
Greenwich Park	4,581	[1]2,000
Peckham	421	111
Hither Green	297	85
Crystal Palace	597	527
Eltham	266	235
Woolwich	1,580	1,616
Bromley	762	[1]Nil

[1] Estimated figures.

Additional resources to deal with the outstanding claims are being allocated where available and the situation is being kept under review.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the approximate cost of kidney dialysis nationally or on a regional basis; how many privately funded dialysis units are in operation; and whether their costs differ from charges made by the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: The approximate total cost* of hospital and home haemodialysis and continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis in England in 1986 was £76 million (at 1986-87 prices). Information is not held centrally about private sector organisations which provide dialysis for private patients, nor do we have information about the costs of privately funded units. We are aware of one privately-operated unit in England which has a contract to provide dialysis for NHS patients and others in Wales which are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The annual charge for dialysis at this unit is of the same order as the costs of NHS satellite units which provide dialysis for patients already established on treatment in other parts of the country.

* This calculation is based on a detailed study in 1981 revalued to 1986-87 price levels, and, as such, cannot take account of recent changes in treatment, case-mix etc.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what instructions he has issued to the West Midlands regional health authority about the numbers of new kidney patients who may receive dialysis treatment; and whether there are any limitations on this treatment being given to kidney patients suffering from diabetes.

Mrs. Currie: There have been no recent instructions issued to regional health authorities about the number of patients with end stage renal failure to be taken onto dialysis. The target set is 40 new kidney patients per million population to be taken on to renal programmes by 1987 has been exceeded by the West Midlands regional health authority. The question of treatment for patients with end stage renal failure who are suffering from diabetes is a matter for clinical judgment.

Accident Prevention

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department proposes to take and what funds will be made available in response to the report "Strategies for Accident Prevention" from the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention and the Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties recently published by his Department.

Mrs. Currie: The Department welcomes this report as made clear by my noble Friend when it was published. We look forward to further initiatives from the medical profession and will be ready to encourage them.

Social Workers (Training)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the current progress of negotiations with the Central Council for Education and Training of Social Workers to implement the proposals for the new three-year training course for social workers, the DOSW.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 22 April at column *601*.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of hearing aids available under the National Health Service; what information he has on costs of hearing aids available privately; what representations he has received about the comparative performance of National Health Service and privately available hearing aids; and if he is planning any action to improve the quality and performance of National Health Service hearing aids.

Mr. Scott: Hearing aids for the National Health Service are obtained by Mersey regional health authority following competitive tendering and costs are not disclosed for good commercial reasons. The prices paid are, however, considerably lower than those charged for private hearing aids. We have not received representations recently in regard to comparative performance but the quality and performance of NHS hearing aids are kept under review by the Department, supported by Mersey RHA.

Benefits and Grants

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what have been the figures for expenditure on supplementary benefits, urgent needs provision, maternity grants, death grants and all other benefits which now come under the social fund, for each year since 1974.

Mr. Portillo: The social fund is designed as a new system for meeting exceptional need and not as a replacement for those benefits which have now been abolished. The figures requested for urgent needs payment, maternity grants, death grants and single payments are set out in the table, as far as they are available.

£ million

Year	*Urgent Needs Payments*	*Maternity Grants*	*Death Grants*	*Single Payments*
1974-75	n/a	16	n/a	n/a
1975-76	n/a	16	16	n/a
1976-77	n/a	15	n/a	n/a
1977-78	n/a	15	n/a	n/a
1978-79	n/a	16	n/a	n/a
1979-80	n/a	17	n/a	40
1980-81	n/a	16	17	48
1981-82	n/a	15	17	57
1982-83	n/a	16	17	98
1983-84	n/a	17	n/a	166
1984-85	0·5	17	17	241
1985-86	0·4	17	17	335
1986-87	1·0	—	—	330

n/a = not available.

Benefit (Capital Disregard)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of raising the limit of capital for eligibility for housing benefit from £6,000 to £10,000 for those who receive state retirement pensions.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available. The overall cost of increasing the capital limit to £10,000 is of the order of £60 million on the assumptions contained in the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 18 April 1988 at columns *341-342*. It is estimated that most of the additional cost would be in respect of those of retirement age.

Ireland (Payments to Itinerants)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement regarding the level of social security payments to itinerants from the Republic of Ireland and the comparable level of payments to citizens of other European Community countries.

Mr. Portillo: European Community nationals who go to another European Community country to seek work are eligible for social assistance benefits equally with and under the same conditions as that country's own nationals but only so long as their right to remain in the country continues.

Housing Benefit (Disregard Threshold)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of raising the disregard threshold of housing benefit from £6,000 to £10,000.

Mr. Portillo: Of the order of £60 million, based on the assumptions contained in the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 18 April 1988 at column *341-42*.

Invasive Carcinoma

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his written reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *611-12*, if he will now arrange for information on the number of women in the United Kingdom suffering from invasive carcinoma to be centrally collected and periodically published.

Mrs. Currie: Data on the incidence of cancer, including histological type, are collected centrally in England and Wales, and in Scotland, from regional cancer registries. Statistics from these data, excluding histological type, are published annually in "Cancer Statistics series MB 1 for England and Wales", and in "Scottish Health Statistics for Scotland". Copies are in the Library.

Comparable statistics for Northern Ireland are not readily available.

Information on the total number of women suffering from cancer at a particular point in time, as opposed to the incidence of new cases, is not collected centrally, nor could it be without encountering very great practical difficulties.

Retail Prices Index Error

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the list of charities to benefit as a result of the non-payment of the retail prices index computer error shortfall to pensioners.

Mr. Scott: I shall be making an announcement shortly.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Leicestershire district health authority has yet introduced cervical screening call and recall schemes for women living within the Leicestershire health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Yes.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time taken to return a woman's cervical smear test results to her doctor within the Leicestershire health authority area.

Mrs. Currie: The average time taken to process a cervical smear test in Leicestershire is currently about eight weeks compared with the Departmental guideline of four weeks. Three additional part-time staff have been recruited to reduce the time taken and are now being trained.

Public Health Laboratory Service (Crown Immunity)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to remove Crown immunity from health and safety legislation from the public health laboratory service.

Mrs. Currie: No. The public health laboratory service is required to comply with the terms of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and, where necessary, is subject to enforcement through the Crown notice procedure.

Nurses (Uniforms)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the rules governing the wearing of uniforms by nurses when off-duty or taking part in demonstrations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There are no national guidelines and it is for individual health authorities to determine policies governing the wearing of uniforms by nurses when off duty.

Hospital Theft

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost to public funds of theft of hospital stores and equipment.

Mrs. Currie: The summarised accounts of regional and district health athorities in England provides a statement of losses, etc. which records losses of equipment and property in stores and in use due to theft, fraud or arson (whether proved or suspected), neglect of duty or gross carelessness. The relevant figures for 1986-87 (the latest year available) are:

	£
Bedding and linen	174,121
Other equipment and property	1,403,977

Retirement Age

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the net cost to public funds if men retired at 60 years and the job vacancies were filled by people currently long-term unemployed.

Mr. Scott: Our best estimate of the net cost to public funds of a men's pension age of 60 is over £3,000 million at 1985-86 prices. This assumes that two-thirds of vacancies are filled and that 75 per cent. of them are filled by people from the unemployment register. if all vacancies were filled, and all by people previously unemployed, the net cost would be about £2,000 million. These figures are currently under review.

Lancashire DHAs

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what his Department estimates will be the increases paid by Lancashire district health authorities in lieu of rates or rates to Lancashire county council and district councils in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much each district health authority in Lancashire paid to Lancashire county council and district councils in lieu of rates or rates in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Information on rates, all rates paid and due to be paid by health authorities to county and district councils is not collected "in year". Health authority annual accounts for 1987-88 are not due for submission to the Department until the end of June 1988. Information for that financial year will be available in the autumn. In the meantime, my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of North Western regional health authority who will be able to provide the information he requires.

Net Weekly Spending Power

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish tables using the assumptions in his answer to the hon. Member for Kensington of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *737*, but using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in those inner London areas for which he has sufficient data, and with an additional column showing the extent of the differences that will result from the changes in benefits intended for April.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 March 1988]:* The information is set out in the tables.

The answers provided are not representative of families with children living in inner London, as the sample covers less than 50 per cent. of the area's boroughs; nor do the answers reflect the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people actually pay.

Old benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for six inner London boroughs
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6

Gross earnings	*Tax*	*NI*	*FIS*	*Child benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate rebate*	*Fares to work*	*Free school meals*	*Free welfare milk*	*Net weekly spending power*
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	14·50	22·92	19·16	10·24	6·95	5·85	2·55	1·83	91·68
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	14·50	22·92	17·91	10·24	6·55	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·13
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	14·50	22·92	16·66	10·24	6·15	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·36
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	14·50	22·92	15·41	10·24	5·75	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·51
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	14·50	22·92	14·16	10·24	5·35	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·46
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	14·50	22·92	12·65	10·24	4·78	5·85	2·55	1·83	91·78
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	14·50	22·92	10·57	10·24	3·97	5·85	2·55	0·00	89·76
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·00	14·50	22·92	7·27	10·24	2·67	5·85	2·55	0·00	91·56
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	14·50	22·92	3·97	10·24	1·37	5·85	2·55	0·00	93·36
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	22·92	0·67	10·24	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	95·09
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	98·27
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	104·67

New benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for six inner London boroughs
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6

Gross earnings	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	14·50	22·92	8·16	10·24	2·42	5·85	83·39	−8·29
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	14·50	22·92	6·58	10·24	1·93	5·85	83·75	−9·38
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	14·50	22·92	5·00	10·24	1·45	5·85	84·11	−10·45
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	14·50	22·92	3·71	10·24	1·05	5·85	84·40	−10·11
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	14·50	22·92	2·43	10·24	0·65	5·85	84·70	−9·76
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	14·50	22·92	1·57	10·24	0·00	5·85	84·51	−7·27
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	84·86	−4·90
130·00	14·72	11·70	7·71	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	86·78	−4·78
140·00	17·42	12·60	3·23	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	88·70	−4·66
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	91·87	−3·22
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	98·27	0·00
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	104·67	0·00

Old benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for six inner London boroughs
Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11

Gross earnings	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60.00	0·00	3·00	32·90	21·75	22·92	20·20	10·24	7·28	5·85	5·10	1·83	107·05
70·00	0·00	4·90	30·50	21·75	22·92	18·30	10·24	6·68	5·85	5·10	1·83	110·25
80·00	1·22	5·60	25·50	21·75	22·92	17·05	10·24	6·28	5·85	5·10	1·83	111·68
90·00	3·92	6·30	20·50	21·75	22·92	15·80	10·24	5·88	5·85	5·10	1·83	111·63
100·00	6·62	7·00	15·50	21·75	22·92	14·55	10·24	5·48	5·85	5·10	1·83	111·58
110·00	9·32	9·90	10·50	21·75	22·92	13·16	10·24	4·99	5·85	5·10	1·83	109·10
120·00	12·02	10·80	5·50	21·75	22·92	11·51	10·24	4·34	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·20
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·50	21·75	22·92	9·86	10·24	3·69	5·85	5·10	1·83	107·30
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	21·75	22·92	6·72	10·24	2·45	5·85	5·10	0·00	106·99
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	21·75	22·92	3·42	10·24	1·15	5·85	5·10	0·00	108·79
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	5·10	0·00	110·62
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	111·92

New Benefit System from April 1988: Average rent and rates for six Inner London Boroughs
Married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11

Gross earnings	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	51·72	21·75	22·92	6·50	10·24	1·91	5·85	99·87	−7·18
70·00	0·00	4·90	46·05	21·75	22·92	4·92	10·24	1·42	5·85	100·23	−10·02
80·00	1·22	5·60	40·39	21·75	22·92	3·24	10·24	0·94	5·85	100·59	−11·09
90·00	3·92	6·30	35·77	21·75	22·92	2·06	10·24	0·54	5·85	100·89	−10·74
100·00	6·62	7·00	31·15	21·75	22·92	0·77	10·24	0·00	5·85	101·04	−10·54
110·00	9·32	9·90	28·07	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	101·59	−7·51
120·00	12·02	10·80	23·59	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	103·51	−4·69
130·00	14·72	11·70	19·11	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	105·43	−1·87
140·00	17·42	12·60	14·63	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	107·35	0·36
150·00	20·12	13·50	10·15	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	109·27	0·48
160·00	22·82	14·40	5·67	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	111·19	0·57
170·00	25·52	15·30	1·19	21·75	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	113·11	1·19

Old benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for six inner London boroughs
Lone working mother with two children aged 4 and 6

Gross earnings	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60.00	0·00	3·00	28·70	19·40	22·92	17·94	10·24	6·56	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·97
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	19·40	22·92	16·69	10·24	6·16	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·42
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	19·40	22·92	15·44	10·24	5·76	5·85	2·55	1·83	97·85
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	19·40	22·92	14·19	10·24	5·36	5·85	2·55	1·83	97·80
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	19·40	22·92	12·68	10·24	4·80	5·85	2·55	1·83	97·33
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	19·40	22·92	11·03	10·24	4·15	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·43
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	19·40	22·92	8·95	10·24	3·33	5·85	2·55	0·00	92·40

New benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for six inner London boroughs
Lone working mother with two children aged 4 and 6

Gross Earnings	Tax	N.I.	Family Credit	Child Benefit	Rent	Rent Rebates	Rates	Rate Rebate	Fares to Work	Net Weekly Spending Power	Difference between Systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	19·40	22·92	2·08	10·24	0·55	5·85	80·34	−14·63
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	19·40	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	80·14	−16·28
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	19·40	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	82·56	−15·29
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	19·40	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	84·54	−13·26
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	19·40	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	86·52	−10·81
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	19·40	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	87·84	−6·59
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	19·40	22·92	0·00	10·24	0·00	5·85	89·76	−2·64

Old tax and benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for 6 inner London boroughs
Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	Supplementary benefit	Earnings	Tax	NI	Fares to work	Rent	[1]Rates	Housing benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power
A. Not working—after 1 year on benefit	45·69	—	—	—	—	22·92	10·24	31·62	19·40	2·55	1·83	67·93
B. Working part time—earning £20 per week	[2]30·65	20·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	22·92	10·24	31·62	19·40	2·55	1·83	69·97
C. Working part time—earning £40 per week	[2]12·11	40·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	22·92	10·24	31·62	19·40	2·55	1·83	71·43

[1] Includes water rates of £1·54.
[2] Assumes benefit in payment for less than a year.

New benefit system from April 1988: Average rent and rates for 6 inner London boroughs
Lone parent with 2 children aged 4 and 6

	Income support	Earnings	Tax	NI	Fares to work	Rent	[1]Rates	Housing benefit	CHB	FSM	FWM	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
A. Not working —after 1 year on benefit	45·35	—	—	—	—	22·92	10·24	29·88	19·40	2·55	1·83	65·85	−2·08
B. Working part-time—earning £20 p.w.	[2]40·35	20·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	22·92	10·24	29·88	19·40	2·55	1·83	77·93	+7·96
C. Working part-time—earning £40 p.w.	[2]20·35	40·00	0·00	0·00	2·92	22·92	10·24	29·88	19·40	2·55	1·83	77·93	+6·50

[1] Includes water rates of £1·54.
[2] Assumes benefit in payment for less than a year.

Notes to tables:

i. Average rent and rates figures for six inner London boroughs have been provided by the Department of Environment.

ii. The Thames Water authority average water rate has been used as the rate is consistent throughout London.

iii. Rent, rates and water rates assumptions for April 1988 are based on the RPI increase for September 1986 to September 1987 (4·2 per cent.).

iv. The remaining assumptions used are those set out in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" October 1987.

v. The "fares to work" used in the tables illustrating part-time earnings are assumed to be half of the "fares to work" of a full-time worker.

vi. The national supplementary benefit figures used in the previous reply of 4th February, have been reduced by 24p. This is the difference between the assumed national average local authority water rate and the assumed London average local authority water rate.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

New Zealand (EC Butter Quota)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is in a position to make a statement on the position of Her Majesty's Government as to their attitude towards the renegotiation of New Zealand's butter quota from the European Community.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The EC Commission has not yet made a proposal on the arrangements for the import of New Zealand butter from 1 January 1989, and so I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 3 March, at column 679.

Beef

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what forecast he has as to total beef production in the United Kingdom in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Future levels of beef production in the United Kingdom will depend on the supply of calves and cull cows from the dairy herd, development of the beef

breeding herd and many other complex factors, all of which are uncertain. I regret that I am unable to provide the figures requested.

Nitrates

Mr. Tam Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 31 March, *Official Report*, column *1264*, when he expects to make a statement on his response to the report of the nitrate co-ordination group.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are currently considering a number of options on nitrate and will announce their conclusions once this evaluation has been completed.

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link, due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is not participating in any of the military home defence exercises due to take place in September and October 1988.

Press Conferences and Background Briefings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods if, pursuant to the answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *259*, he will state what practical definition his Department uses for *(a)* a press conference and *(b)* background briefings.

Mr. MacGregor: Press conferences are on-the-record and normally called to announce new developments. Background briefings are usually concerned with ongoing issues or when requested by individual journalists.

Chernobyl (Briefing)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *259* which newspapers and other publications were invited to his Ministry's background briefings on Chernobyl on *(a)* 21 April 1987 and *(b)* 21 March 1988.

Mr. MacGregor: We do not give the names of those invited to background briefings.

Research and Development (Barnes Report)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all those persons and organisations outside Her Majesty's Government who have already been consulted on the Barnes report on agricultural research and development; which of these have reported; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As explained in the reply given to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) on 3 March, at column *674*, there have been no formal consultations outside Government. But the following is a comprehensive list of all the organisations contacted or from which views were received. The report itself is under consideration.

Agricultural and Food Research Council (HQ and RIs)
Agricultural attachés, Bonn, The Hague, Madrid, Paris
Apple and Pear Development Council
Arable Research Centres Ltd.
British Food Manufacturing Industry RA
British Institute of Agricultural Consultants
British Poultry Federation
Building Services Research and Information Association
Cabinet Office
Cambridge Life Sciences Ltd.
Campden Food Preservation RA
Dairy Trade Federation
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
Department of Education and Science
Department of Trade and Industry
Farm Advisory Services Team
Flour Milling and Baking RA
Food and Drink Federation
Home Grown Cereals Authority
Horticultural Development Council
Huntingdon Research Centre
ICI (Plant Protection)
Institute of Arable Crop Consultants
Institute of Professional Civil Servants
Marks and Spencer plc
Meat and Livestock Commission
Milk Marketing Board for England and Wales
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
National Farmers' Union
National Pig Breeders' Association
Potato Marketing Board
Potato Processors' Association
Priorities Board
Processors and Growers Research Organisation
RHM Ltd.
Sainsburys plc
Scottish Agricultural Colleges
Scottish Agricultural Research Institutes
Scottish National Farmers' Union
Sea Fish Industry Authority
South Eastern Regional Panel Chairman and farmer members
Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee
Tate and Lyle
Unilever Ltd.
United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association
Welsh Office Agriculture Department

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the Government to reach their conclusion on the Barnes report on agricultural research and development; what factors are influencing the timing of a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The report has only just been completed and is now under consideration. It is too early to say when conclusions might be reached.

Foreign Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the total costs incurred by his Department on foreign travel during the financial year 1987-88 identified by *(a)* ministerial travel and *(b)* travel abroad by civil servants.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* Accounts for the financial year 1987-88 have yet to be finalised, but provisional figures indicate that the total costs incurred by my Department on foreign travel, including related subsistence, were as follows:

	£
Ministerial travel (including civil servants in Ministers' offices whose costs cannot be separately identified)	106,265
Travel by civil servants	1,125,293
Total:	1,231,558

Of the total, travel costs on European Community business, not including subsistence, accounted for £480,058, the bulk of which is recoverable from Community funds.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Records, Compact Discs and Tapes

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the increase in the value of United Kingdom trade deliveries of records, compact discs and tapes between 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Atkins: Figures released by the British phonographic industry show that the percentage increases between 1986 and 1987 in the value of United Kingdom trade deliveries were as follows:—

	Percentage increase
Singles	5
LPs	4
Cassettes	22
CDs	106
Combined Albums	28
Total	24

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department is not involved in any of these exercises.

Action for Cities

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give a breakdown by *(a)* Department, *(b)* social category and *(c)* project or programme of how the sum of £3,000 million to support urban regeneration referred to in the launch of Action for Cities is comprised; and if he will identify how much of this is new expenditure.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is shown in the table. Most of the expenditure shown is provided for within published estimates of public expenditure. In most cases the precise allocation of resources depends on the projects submitted for approval. The programmes shown largely relate to inner city development, enterprise and employment — the main themes of the Action for Cities document launched on 7 March. There is no reference to other programmes, including those supported by the Home Office, Department of Education and Science and Department of Health and Social Security which benefit inner cities.

Action for Cities: estimated expenditure 1988-89	*£ million*
Employment, Training and Enterprise programmes, including support for small firms. Total excludes programmes administered nationally eg Loan Guarantee Scheme, YTS schemes with national companies (Department of Employment/MSC)	1,119
Estate Action—involving tenants in management and improvement of their homes; additional expenditure by local authorities (Department of the Environment)	140
Funding for Housing Associations through Housing Corporations and through local authorities. (Local authorities share £50 million) (Department of the Environment)	450
Urban Programme, including Urban Development and Urban Regeneration Grants	314
Urban Development Corporations	203
Derelict Land Reclamation (Department of the Environment)	25
Task Forces City Action Teams. (Department of Trade and Industry)	21
Support for inner city business, including Regional Selective Assistance, investment and innovation grants for small firms, and English Estates (Department of Trade and Industry)	200
Roads—schemes in Department of Transport programme and supported by Transport Supplementary Grant	250
Equivalent programmes in Scotland and Wales	300
Total	3,022

Research and Development

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what procedures exist for estimating the rate of return on Government-funded research and development, and what are the latest estimates for *(a)* aerospace, *(b)* electronic engineering, *(c)* mechanical engineering, *(d)* nuclear power and *(e)* chemical industry.

Mr. Butcher: There are procedures for evaluating the net benefits of Government-funded research and development. They rarely provide estimates of rates of return and are not generally available by industrial sector. The annual review of Government-funded R and D reports the evaluations undertaken by Departments.

Internal Market

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has conducted any investigation into the effects on British industry of the internal market on a sector by sector basis, or in respect of any individual sector.

Mr. Alan Clark: The completion of the single market will provide great opportunities for a wide range of United Kingdom business sectors. As part of the Government's efforts to make sure that United Kingdom companies are aware of and make the most of these opportunities, we are in active discussion with all sectors of United Kingdom business. Our priorities on the single market naturally take account of the position of different sectors.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the proposals made by the European Community Commission in respect of the

internal market have the agreement of Her Majesty's Government; identifying them and those to which Her Majesty's Government do not agree.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government strongly support the aim of completing the single market. We attach priority to many of the proposals made by the European Commission, but have difficulties with some others—as do other member states. Many measures in the single market programme are complex and all involve detailed negotiation. It would not therefore be possible to present the information in the form requested. Copies of the 1988 presidency action programme on the single market, which lists over 140 individual measures for discussion by the Council this year, are available in the Library of the House.

Standards

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many of the secretariats of the 81 technical committees concerned with standards in the European Economic Community Britain holds; and how many it sought;

(2) what representations he has received concerning British participation in the technical committees concerned with standards in the European Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: Harmonised European standards for non-electrical products are produced by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN). According to the latest information, CEN how has 90 technical committees, of which the United Kingdom holds 11 secretariats.

Since June 1987 the United Kingdom has sought the secretariat of four technical committees and obtained three. My Department has received only a small number of representations from industry representatives about United Kingdom participation in the CEN technical committees.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), *Official Report*, 31 March 1988, column *590*.

British National Space Centre

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who currently is the deputy director of the British National Space Centre; and how many of those who are its officers are drawn from industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is no official position of deputy director of the British National Space Centre. Mr. A. C. Nicholas and Mr. K. Inglis acted temporarily as deputy directors following the retirement of Mr. J. C. Leeming on 28 February 1988. I have announced — *Official Report*, 18 April 1988, columns *350-51* — the appointment of Mr. Arthur Pryor as the new director. None of the BNSC staff is from industry, though an industry representative sits on the BNSC management board.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the British National Space Centre is funded entirely from public funds; and if he will make a statement on its future.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The British National Space Centre is funded entirely from public funds. I have nothing further to add to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) on 18 April 1988.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of those who serve at the British National Space Centre and if he will state the terms of reference defining the role of the centre, and the budget available to it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The British National Space Centre was set up to co-ordinate the civil space interests of Government, including those of the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Defence, the Science and Engineering Research Council and the National Environment Research Council. The BNSC co-ordinates an annual budget of some £120 million and has a staff of around 300.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made concerning the appointment of a director for the National Space Centre.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I announced the appointment of Mr. Arthur Pryor as director general on 18 April.

Airbus

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has yet formed a view on the Coopers and Lybrand report on the Airbus enterprise, a copy of which was sent to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have seen the report, which was commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand by the Boeing company. The Government are at present considering the Airbus system in the light of the recent report of the four independent experts, colloquially known as the "wise men". I have nothing to add on this matter to my reply to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) on 13 April.

Shoe Imports (Taiwan)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he now plans to take steps to limit shoe imports from Taiwan.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government have received detailed information on the effects upon United Kingdom manufacturers of shoe imports from Taiwan, which we are urgently considering.

SIB (Recognition Orders)

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether leave has yet been give under section 120(2) of the Financial Services Act for the Securities and Investments Board to make recognition orders in respect of any investment exchanges or clearing houses.

Mr. Maude: Having considered, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, reports made by the Director General of Fair Trading on the rules, regulations, guidance and arrangements submitted by the exchanges and clearing houses listed in the table, my right hon. and noble Friend has concluded that on the basis of the information presently available to him he does not

consider there is anything in the material submitted which has, or is intended or likely to have, to any significant extent the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition. He has therefore given his leave to the SIB to make recognition orders in respect of the following investment exchanges and clearing houses:

The London International Financial Futures Exchange Ltd.
LIFFE Options plc.
The London Metal Exchange Limited.
London Commodity Exchange (1986) Limited.
The International Petroleum Exchange of London Limited.
International Commodities Clearing House Limited.
GAFTA Clearing House Company Limited.

Debt Counselling

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he plans to review the level of funding of bodies offering debt counselling particularly in relation to short-term programmes; and if he will make a statement on the level of debt counselling available in Scotland.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

Most debt counselling in Scotland is provided by citizens advice bureaux. The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which provides the central support services for local bureaux, is almost entirely funded by the Government. Its grant-in-aid for the current financial year is £926,000 and this is reviewed each year. The running costs of local bureaux are a matter for local funding, however, I understand that citizens advice bureaux dealt with over 42,000 debt counselling cases in 1986-87 from their 82 offices throughout Scotland.

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much his Department intends spending on advertising the enterprise initiative in 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Budget allocations for advertising the enterprise initiative during 1988-89 are still under discussion in my Department. The amount finally set will take into account the need to maintain a good level of response to the initiative.

Space (Technology Demonstration Programme)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with his opposite numbers in the European Space Agency about setting in hand a technology demonstration programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Technology demonstration is a component of many ESA programmes. The agency also has an optional in-orbit technology demonstration activity, already under way. I have not had occasion to discuss this with my ESA opposite numbers, although my officials at the British National Space Centre keep closely in touch with officials at ESA.

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the estimated population of 18 years and over resident in each rating authority area in England.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Adult Population of English Rating Authorities (June 1986)

	Number
Isles of Scilly	1,539
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	195,901
Bury	131,008
Manchester	342,715
Oldham	164,702
Rochdale	152,608
Salford	182,941
Stockport	221,840
Tameside	164,052
Trafford	166,004
Wigan	230,873
Merseyside	
Knowsley	118,385
Liverpool	368,281
St. Helens	142,259
Sefton	229,252
Wirral	255,269
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	169,161
Doncaster	218,528
Rotherham	189,586
Sheffield	419,723
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	160,557
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	218,470
North Tyneside	149,032
South Tyneside	121,495
Sunderland	222,994
West Midlands	
Birmingham	752,500
Coventry	233,952
Dudley	231,932
Sandwell	228,446
Solihull	153,225
Walsall	198,070
Wolverhampton	189,626
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	340,265
Calderdale	147,004
Kirklees	282,669
Leeds	545,761
Wakefield	235,411
City of London	4,168
Camden	149,491
Greenwich	164,761
Hackney	139,732
Hammersmith and Fulham	121,239
Islington	132,315
Kensington and Chelsea	113,665
Lambeth	190,495
Lewisham	179,299
Southwark	167,322
Tower Hamlets	114,696
Wandsworth	203,066
Westminster	146,211

	Number
Barking and Dagenham	113,827
Barnet	236,251
Bexley	169,989
Brent	196,451
Bromley	233,770
Croydon	244,725
Ealing	227,942
Enfield	205,438
Haringey	151,495
Harrow	155,859
Havering	184,829
Hillingdon	179,030
Hounslow	148,430
Kingston-upon-Thames	106,056
Merton	128,933
Newham	152,381
Redbridge	178,300
Richmond-upon-Thames	130,312
Sutton	132,052
Waltham Forest	165,044
Avon	
Bath	66,827
Bristol	304,059
Kingswood	68,466
Northavon	94,857
Wansdyke	60,668
Woodspring	137,691
Bedfordshire	
North Bedfordshire	100,917
Luton	122,396
Mid Bedfordshire	83,056
South Bedfordshire	81,645
Berkshire	
Bracknell	68,452
Newbury	99,801
Reading	103,084
Slough	73,380
Windsor and Maidenhead	101,423
Wokingham	105,063
Buckinghamshire	
Aylesbury Vale	106,137
South Bucks	47,904
Chiltern	70,432
Milton Keynes	114,332
Wycombe	117,252
Cambridgeshire	
Cambridge	78,617
East Cambridgeshire	44,949
Fenland	54,065
Huntingdonshire	103,359
Peterborough	108,478
South Cambridgeshire	87,951
Cheshire	
Chester	90,542
Congleton	64,996
Crewe and Nantwich	74,241
Ellesmere and Neston	59,892
Halton	89,098
Macclesfield	118,038
Vale Royal	85,466
Warrington	135,314
Cleveland	
Hartlepool	68,206
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	109,629
Middlesbrough	105,712
Stockton on Tees	130,932
Cornwall	
Caradon	55,568

	Number
Carrick	62,354
Kerrier	66,704
North Cornwall	54,734
Penwith	44,716
Restormel	64,056
Cumbria	
Allerdale	74,319
Barrow in Furness	56,877
Carlisle	78,160
Copeland	54,387
Eden	35,174
South Lakeland	77,866
Derbyshire	
Amber Valley	85,378
Bolsover	53,733
Chesterfield	75,731
Derby	163,106
Erewash	81,427
High Peak	63,510
North East Derbyshire	75,076
South Derbyshire	53,276
Derbyshire Dales	52,316
Devon	
East Devon	91,349
Exeter	77,030
North Devon	63,258
Plymouth	194,787
South Hams	56,319
Teignbridge	84,511
Mid Devon	46,850
Torbay	94,570
Torridge	38,990
West Devon	34,149
Dorset	
Bournemouth	124,265
Christchurch	34,198
North Dorset	39,895
Poole	99,462
Purbeck	34,527
West Dorset	65,263
Weymouth and Portland	48,469
East Dorset	61,250
Durham	
Chester Le Street	40,702
Darlington	76,452
Derwentside	66,669
Durham	66,009
Easington	73,298
Sedgefield	67,374
Teesdale	19,274
Wear Valley	49,958
East Sussex	
Brighton	113,740
Eastbourne	65,643
Hastings	63,267
Hove	73,814
Lewes	68,741
Rother	66,905
Wealden	100,496
Essex	
Basildon	116,437
Braintree	87,235
Brentwood	55,756
Castle Point	64,827
Chelmsford	113,121
Colchester	110,047
Epping Forest	89,344
Harlow	55,451
Maldon	39,425
Rochford	57,226

	Number
Southend on Sea	126,367
Tendering	99,397
Thurrock	92,999
Uttlesford	49,652
Gloucestershire	
Cheltenham	67,033
Cotswold	56,800
Forest of Dean	57,737
Gloucester	68,783
Stroud	81,804
Tewkesbury	65,807
Hampshire	
Basingstoke and Deane	101,740
East Hampshire	74,014
Eastleigh	75,472
Fareham	73,251
Gosport	57,145
Hart	60,142
Havant	88,605
New Forest	124,233
Portsmouth	146,741
Rushmoor	59,739
Southampton	153,754
Test Valley	75,950
Winchester	72,089
Hereford and Worcester	
Bromsgrove	68,167
Hereford	37,165
Leominster	29,850
Malvern Hills	66,993
Redditch	52,856
South Herefordshire	37,799
Worcester	58,470
Wychavon	75,576
Wyre Forest	70,603
Hertfordshire	
Broxbourne	62,543
Dacorum	100,276
East Hertfordshire	89,764
Hertsmere	68,313
North Hertfordshire	84,548
St. Albans	99,290
Stevenage	55,742
Three Rivers	62,371
Watford	57,721
Welwyn Hatfield	72,497
Humberside	
Beverley	85,179
Boothferry	47,227
Cleethorpes	52,121
Glanford	52,703
Great Grimsby	67,522
Holderness	37,314
Kingston-Upon-Hull	192,838
East Yorkshire	62,077
Scunthorpe	46,737
Isle of Wight	
Medina	55,434
South Wight	43,485
Kent	
Ashford	70,350
Canterbury	99,145
Dartford	58,434
Dover	80,670
Gillingham	70,712
Gravesham	71,181
Maidstone	102,388
Rochester on Medway	108,501
Sevenoaks	83,511
Shepway	69,857

	Number
Swale	83,790
Thanet	97,267
Tonbridge and Malling	76,394
Tunbridge Wells	75,171
Lancashire	
Blackburn	101,228
Blackpool	117,419
Burnley	66,136
Chorley	71,014
Fylde	58,073
Hyndburn	60,033
Lancaster	101,666
Pendle	63,471
Preston	94,337
Ribble Valley	40,530
Rossendale	47,698
South Ribble	73,529
West Lancashire	79,528
Wyre	79,860
Leicestershire	
Blaby	61,939
Charnwood	110,277
Harborough	49,172
Hinckley and Bosworth	71,566
Leicester	208,122
Melton	32,792
North West Leicester	60,428
Oadby and Wigston	40,116
Rutland	26,403
Lincolnshire	
Boston	40,517
East Lindsey	87,192
Lincoln	60,292
North Kesteven	64,136
South Holland	50,902
South Kesteven	76,863
West Lindsey	58,389
Norfolk	
Breckland	78,071
Broadland	78,688
Great Yarmouth	65,851
North Norfolk	72,259
Norwich	94,638
South Norfolk	77,222
Kings Lynn/West Norfolk	99,417
Northamptonshire	
Corby	37,112
Daventry	45,555
East Northampton	48,646
Kettering	55,932
Northampton	129,352
South Northampton	50,488
Wellingborough	48,872
Northumberland	
Alnwick	23,057
Berwick-upon-Tweed	20,745
Blyth Valley	58,114
Castle Morpeth	39,673
Tynedale	42,819
Wansbeck	46,596
North Yorkshire	
Craven	37,763
Hambleton	58,560
Harrogate	113,599
Richmondshire	37,359
Ryedale	69,440
Scarborough	81,733
Selby	66,307
York	79,477

	Number
Nottinghamshire	
Ashfield	81,464
Bassetlaw	80,368
Broxtowe	82,472
Gedling	82,767
Mansfield	76,325
Newark and Sherwood	80,738
Nottingham	210,938
Rushcliffe	75,119
Oxfordshire	
Cherwell	89,750
Oxford	89,871
South Oxfordshire	101,455
Vale of White Horse	83,265
West Oxfordshire	70,392
Shropshire	
Bridgnorth	39,704
North Shropshire	40,153
Oswestry	24,353
Shrewsbury and Atcham	69,761
South Shropshire	27,580
The Wrekin	95,027
Somerset	
Mendip	71,103
Sedgemoor	72,433
Taunton Deane	70,727
West Somerset	24,781
South Somerset	106,644
Staffordshire	
Cannock Chase	63,844
East Staffordshire	72,007
Lichfield	69,145
Newcastle under Lyme	91,106
South Staffordshire	79,491
Stafford	91,257
Staffordshire, Moorlands	73,729
Stoke-on-Trent	189,901
Tamworth	47,563
Suffolk	
Babergh	58,331
Forest Heath	41,111
Ipswich	89,879
Mid Suffolk	57,589
St. Edmundsbury	68,839
Suffolk Coastal	80,870
Waveney	81,494
Surrey	
Elmbridge	86,709
Epsom and Ewell	52,461
Guildford	96,533
Mole Valley	60,749
Reigate and Banstead	90,927
Runnymede	56,214
Spelthorne	70,487
Surrey Heath	59,633
Tandridge	58,975
Waverley	85,488
Woking	65,837
Warwickshire	
North Warwickshire	45,659
Nuneaton and Bedworth	85,444
Rugby	64,003
Stratford-on-Avon	81,817
Warwick	90,904
West Sussex	
Adur	46,150
Arun	103,146
Chichester	83,169
Crawley	63,906
Horsham	80,862
Mid Sussex	91,035
Worthing	78,678
Wiltshire	
Kennet	49,531
North Wiltshire	83,458
Salisbury	79,242
Thamedown	122,619
West Wiltshire	77,972

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the rates paid per head of population of 18 years and over in each rating authority for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: Listed is the available information for 1987-88:

Unrebated domestic rate bill per adult

	£
Isles of Scilly	180
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	194
Bury	239
Manchester	291
Oldham	184
Rochdale	212
Salford	227
Stockport	235
Tameside	205
Trafford	232
Wigan	212
Merseyside	
Knowsley	263
Liverpool	264
St. Helens	233
Sefton	242
Wirral	284
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	172
Doncaster	202
Rotherham	195
Sheffield	213
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	182
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	261
North Tyneside	250
South Tyneside	189
Sunderland	194
West Midlands	
Birmingham	231
Coventry	241
Dudley	237
Sandwell	214
Solihull	240
Walsall	243
Wolverhampton	245
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	187
Calderdale	166
Kirklees	165
Leeds	175
Wakefield	185
City of London	457
Camden	412

	£
Greenwich	244
Hackney	295
Hammersmith and Fulham	310
Islington	276
Kensington and Chelsea	344
Lambeth	289
Lewisham	279
Southwark	275
Tower Hamlets	285
Wandsworth	161
Westminster	497
Barking and Dagenham	205
Barnet	293
Bexley	187
Brent	324
Bromley	211
Croydon	212
Ealing	299
Enfield	223
Haringey	350
Harrow	259
Havering	206
Hillingdon	252
Hounslow	301
Kingston-upon-Thames	243
Merton	219
Newham	277
Redbridge	197
Richmond-upon-Thames	274
Sutton	246
Waltham Forest	366
Cornwall	
Caradon	160
Carrick	167
Kerrier	145
North Cornwall	162
Penwith	157
Restormel	154
Cumbria	
Allerdale	167
Barrow in Furness	151
Carlisle	184
Copeland	154
Eden	167
South Lakeland	204
Derbyshire	
Amber Valley	216
Bolsover	194
Chesterfield	219
Derby	258
Erewash	217
High Peak	209
North East Derbyshire	230
South Derbyshire	231
Derbyshire Dales	244
Devon	
East Devon	188
Exeter	163
North Devon	143
Plymouth	165
South Hams	195
Teignbridge	169
Mid Devon	147
Torbay	203
Torridge	130
West Devon	157
Dorset	
Bournemouth	212
Christchurch	241
North Dorset	171
Poole	241
Purbeck	184
West Dorset	174
Weymouth & Portland	167
East Dorset	249
Durham	
Chester Le Street	180
Darlington	194
Derwentside	163
Durham	173
Easington	145
Sedgefield	172
Teesdale	127
Wear Valley	149
East Sussex	
Brighton	230
Eastbourne	258
Hastings	204
Hove	230
Lewes	240
Rother	254
Wealden	222
Essex	
Basildon	305
Braintree	217
Brentwood	310
Castle Point	254
Chelmsford	258
Colchester	206
Epping Forest	301
Harlow	323
Maldon	246
Rochford	270
Southend on Sea	267
Tendring	237
Thurrock	269
Uttlesford	262
Gloucestershire	
Cheltenham	217
Cotswold	216
Forest of Dean	150
Gloucester	170
Stroud	189
Tewkesbury	204
Hampshire	
Basingstoke and Deane	193
East Hampshire	228
Eastleigh	210
Fareham	226
Gosport	197
Hart	249
Havant	218
New Forest	208
Portsmouth	169
Rushmoor	191
Southampton	176
Test Valley	201
Winchester	223
Hereford and Worcester	
Bromsgrove	206
Hereford	153
Leominster	148
Malvern Hills	207
Redditch	207
South Herefordshire	147
Worcester	210
Wychavon	217
Wyre Forest	194
Avon	
Bath	200
Bristol	222
Kingswood	204

	£
Northavon	214
Wansdyke	213
Woodspring	234
Bedfordshire	
North Bedfordshire	257
Luton	296
Mid Bedfordshire	255
South Bedfordshire	297
Berkshire	
Bracknell	220
Newbury	216
Reading	200
Slough	202
Windsor and Maidenhead	261
Wokingham	237
Buckinghamshire	
Aylesbury Vale	231
South Bucks	364
Chiltern	360
Milton Keynes	244
Wycombe	297
Cambridgeshire	
Cambridge	251
East Cambridgeshire	182
Fenland	175
Huntingdonshire	199
Peterborough	216
South Cambridgeshire	254
Cheshire	
Chester	236
Congleton	221
Crewe and Nantwich	225
Ellesmere and Neston	238
Halton	202
Macclesfield	273
Vale Royal	216
Warrington	208
Cleveland	
Hartlepool	198
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	236
Middlesbrough	236
Stockton on Tees	233
Hertfordshire	
Broxbourne	247
Dacorum	277
East Hertfordshire	251
Hertsmere	301
North Hertfordshire	271
St. Albans	278
Stevenage	280
Three Rivers	306
Watford	259
Welwyn Hatfield	296
Humberside	
Beverley	229
Boothferry	156
Cleethorpes	188
Glanford	179
Great Grimsby	175
Holderness	179
Kingston-upon-Hull	177
East Yorkshire	171
Scunthorpe	202
Isle of Wight	
Medina	192
South Wight	208
Kent	
Ashford	174
Canterbury	168
Dartford	164
Dover	147
Gillingham	155
Gravesham	173
Maidstone	166
Rochester on Medway	153
Sevenoaks	185
Shepway	195
Swale	146
Thanet	180
Tonbridge and Malling	167
Tunbridge Wells	172
Lancashire	
Blackburn	147
Blackpool	179
Burnley	137
Chorley	175
Fylde	204
Hyndburn	131
Lancaster	154
Pendle	129
Preston	167
Ribble Valley	170
Rossendale	151
South Ribble	168
West Lancashire	209
Wyre	183
Leicestershire	
Blaby	207
Charnwood	211
Harborough	224
Hinckley and Bosworth	195
Leicester	182
Melton	196
North West Leicester	198
Oadby and Wigston	217
Rutland	186
Lincolnshire	
Boston	157
East Lindsey	156
Lincoln	153
North Kesteven	154
South Holland	154
South Kesteven	167
West Lindsey	154
Norfolk	
Breckland	158
Broadland	177
Great Yarmouth	167
North Norfolk	161
Norwich	188
South Norfolk	178
Kings Lynn/West Norfolk	149
Northamptonshire	
Corby	198
Daventry	230
East Northampton	174
Kettering	187
Northampton	221
South Northampton	218
Wellingborough	185
Northumberland	
Alnwick	168
Berwick-upon-Tweed	173
Blyth Valley	199
Castle Morpeth	214
Tynedale	179
Wansbeck	175

	£
North Yorkshire	
Craven	149
Hambleton	171
Harrogate	192
Richmondshire	142
Ryedale	152
Scarborough	159
Selby	152
York	129
Nottinghamshire	
Ashfield	175
Bassetlaw	190
Broxtowe	212
Gedling	232
Mansfield	192
Newark and Sherwood	189
Nottingham	204
Rushcliffe	244
Oxfordshire	
Cherwell	217
Oxford	220
South Oxfordshire	250
Vale of White Horse	233
West Oxfordshire	215
Shropshire	
Bridgnorth	175
North Shropshire	152
Oswestry	151
Shrewsbury and Atcham	184
South Shropshire	151
The Wrekin	189
Somerset	
Mendip	183
Sedgemoor	193
Taunton Deane	182
West Somerset	195
South Somerset	183
Staffordshire	
Cannock Chase	191
East Staffordshire	185
Lichfield	230
Newcastle under Lyme	189
South Staffordshire	231
Stafford	196
Staffs. Moorlands	180
Stoke-on-Trent	167
Tamworth	205
Suffolk	
Babergh	196
Forest Heath	170
Ipswich	205
Mid Suffolk	182
St. Edmundsbury	176
Suffolk Coastal	216
Waveney	182
Surrey	
Elmbridge	329
Epsom and Ewell	298
Guildford	249
Mole Valley	252
Reigate and Banstead	263
Runnymede	226
Spelthorne	231
Surrey Heath	268
Tandridge	228
Waverley	273
Woking	271
Warwickshire	
North Warwickshire	218
Nuneaton & Bedworth	220
Rugby	223
Stratford-on-Avon	261
Warwick	257
West Sussex	
Adur	217
Arun	214
Chichester	200
Crawley	197
Horsham	205
Mid Sussex	224
Worthing	206
Wiltshire	
Kennet	184
North Wiltshire	168
Salisbury	191
Thamesdown	198
West Wiltshire	178

Government Offices (Energy Efficiency)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the target power loading expressed in watts per square metre to which the Property Services Agency works when assessing the energy efficiency of the Government's estate.

Mr. Chope: PSA has no single power loading target for assessing energy efficiency; targets vary widely according to the building type, use and occupancy. Individual Government Departments are now responsible for setting their own energy efficiency targets.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spent in 1987 in improving the energy efficiency of lighting in Government offices and premises.

Mr. Chope: On the central Government civil estate covered by the PRS system, approximately £750,000 was made available by PSA in 1987-88 for investment in lighting energy efficiency measures. Savings will also accrue from PSA's maintenance and replacement programme.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much office space per square foot is occupied by Government Departments; how much electricity is consumed by lighting in these offices; and by how much this has been reduced since 1979 as a result of energy conservation measures.

Mr. Chope: The central Government civil estate covered by the PRS system includes approximately 6·6 million sq m of office accommodation, including computer centres. The electricity consumption of these offices costs approximately £16 million per year. It is not feasible to keep separate records for the whole estate on the energy consumption of lighting installations.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what target reductions in electricity usage for lighting the Property Services Agency expects to achieve in 1988; and what was the target for 1987.

Mr. Chope: PSA does not set specific targets for savings in electrical consumption for lighting. Targets are set for total energy savings, which are now the responsibility of individual Departments.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will be responsible for the payment of the poll tax on prison department properties lived in by prison officers and their families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Prison officers and members of their families over the age of 18 will be responsible for paying the personal community charge on the same basis as other adults.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance is to be given to local authorities in England and Wales to compensate for the information technology expenditure which will be incurred by the registration process for the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 13 April at column 127 to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) and my reply of 20 April at column 481 to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the additional administration costs falling on the London borough of Waltham Forest as a result of his decision to make transitional arrangements for introduction of the community charge in that borough; and if he will reimburse those additional administration costs.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his reply, 3 December 1987; c. 642]:* We have now further considered the question of reimbursing those boroughs which will be required to maintain their domestic rating system alongside the community charge during the transitional period. We have concluded that it would be right to arrange for some compensation for the reasonable extra costs involved outside the revenue support grant arrangements. We shall therefore be seeking a power to pay specific grant to the boroughs concerned. The details of the proposed grant will be a matter for consultation.

We have also reconsidered the extent of the application of these arrangements in the light of representations from some of those affected and in the light of the preliminary returns of expenditure for 1988-89. We have concluded that it would be right to increase the threshold for inclusion within these arrangements so that only those areas where combined budgeted expenditure for 1987-88 of the authorities operating in that area exceeded the combined needs assessment for the area by more than £200 per head will now be affected. This change would have the effect of ensuring that domestic rates would be abolished in the London borough of Waltham Forest, the Royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the City of Westminster and the London borough of Wandsworth from 1 April 1990.

Shopping and Leisure Complexes

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy on out-of-town shopping and leisure complexes in the light of the recent consultation paper issued by SERPLAN on out-of-town shopping and leisure complexes, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Waldegrave: The London and South East Regional Planning Conference published a paper "Towards a Policy for Regional Shopping Centres" in July 1987. SERPLAN drew on responses to that paper in commenting last autumn on a consultation paper by my Department which became planning policy guidance note 6, published on 20 January. This note sets out the Government's policy on major retail development; a copy is in the Library.

Housing (Rural Areas)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for initiatives to provide new rented housing for local people in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The White Paper published last September, "Housing: The Government's Proposals", Cm. 214, set out the Government's proposals for housing generally including proposals to expand the housing association programme which provides low cost homes for rent and other tenures in rural and urban areas. On 11 February my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning announced that the Housing Corporation's guidelines for allocations to rural areas were being reviewed. Priority will no longer be confined to designated rural stress areas and the corporation will aim to double the present level of provision by housing associations in rural areas.

We are considering whether any further measures, designed specifically to help rural areas, are needed.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications of the price differential that now exists between leaded and unleaded petrol for the date on which he envisages that the European directive on vehicle emissions for medium and large car categories will be implemented.

Mr. Moynihan: The increased duty differential between unleaded and leaded petrol announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement has no implications for the Government's plans to implement the new EC directive 87/76/EEC, which remain as I stated in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 7 December, at columns 20-21.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on an agreement to control the exhaust emissions from small cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I reported the current state of discussions on stage II emission limits for small cars under the new EC directive 87/76/EEC in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) on 24 March, at columns 186-87. It is for the German presidency to consider how further progress towards an agreement might be made.

Unused Sites (Richmond)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the unused sites owned by public bodies within the London borough of Richmond upon Thames together with their owners and sizes in acres.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested for unused and underutilised sites entered on the land register for the London borough of Richmond upon Thames is as follows:

Owner and site address	*Size in acres*
London borough of Richmond upon Thames	
Land at Meadway, Twickenham	3·50
Land at Oak avenue, Hampton	3·25
Lichfield gardens car park, Richmond	1·40
British Railways Board	
Barnes station goods yard, Queens Ride	2·74
Land off Church road, Richmond	1·00
Land adjacent to the River Crane, Twickenham	2·88
London residuary body	
254-392 Chertsey road	6·58
Thames water authority	
Part of Petersham pumping station	1·70
North of Upper Sunbury road, South of Kempton Park reservoirs	38·60

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: DOE involvement in the forthcoming military home defence exercises is expected to be minimal and limited to normal day-to-day support services provided, on request, by the Property Services Agency.

Housing Associations

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing associations in receipt of higher management allowance for their work in the inner city areas; and if he will give the amount of the allowance in each case.

Mrs. Roe: Higher management allowances are awarded to housing associations to reflect the additional costs arising from tenant needs and estate difficulties which present particular problems, including work in areas of urban and rural stress. The list below details those associations in receipt of HMA as at 1 April 1988 who cited the fact that they worked in such stress areas as at least part of the reason for their extra management costs. The HMA awards made to these associations are also listed.

Higher Management Allowances, Associations working in stress areas

Association Name and Operational Area	*HMA £ per unit*
Baptist HAL, London North	44
Battersea Churches HT, London South	91
Battersea Tenants Co-op, London South	91
Beth Johnson HAL, West Midlands	49
Bethnal Green and East London, London North	44
Birmingham Friendship, West Midlands	107
Bradford and Northern, North East	45
Brent Peoples HAL, London North	91
Bridge HSL, East Midlands	43
Bristol Churches, West	62
Brunel and Family HAL, North East	81
Caldmore Area HAL, West Midlands	118
Central and Provincial HT, London North	41
Cheshire Foundation, London North	70
Cheviot HAL, North East	26
Chichester Diocesan, London South	62
Christ Action (Enfield), London North	42
Church HAL, London North	91
Circle 33 HT, London North	91
Coastal Counties HA, London South	45
Columbus First HAL, London North	60
Community HAL, London North	91
Community Relations HA, North West	118
Coventry Churches (2nd), West Midlands	118
Coventry Churches HAL, West Midlands	118
Croydon Churches, London South	74
De Montfort HSL, East Midlands	49
Ealing Family HAL, London North (N)	91
East London HAL, London North	62
East Midlands HAL, East Midlands	52
East Midlands Retirement, East Midlands	51
Eaves Brook HA, North West	37
Elizabeth Bates HSL, London North	35
Endeavour HAL, North East	22
Family First Trust, East Midlands	91
Family HA, London South	118
FHA Birkenhead, Merseyside	33
Furnival HSG Co-op, West	55
Greater Hornby HA, Merseyside	90
Grosvenor HA, Merseyside	24
Habinteg HAL, London North	102
Heantun HAL, West Midlands	112
Hestia HAL, West Midlands	118
Holyland HSG Co-op, Merseyside	131
Humanist Hal, London North	52
Hyde HA, London South	104
Irwell Valley, North West	112
Keniston (Second) HAL, London North	66
Keniston HAL, London North	91
Kensington HT, London North	66
Knightstone HA, West	42
Leicester HAL, East Midlands	118
Leicester Students HAL, East Midlands	39
Liver HA, Merseyside	76
London and Quadrant, London South	91
Lotus HSL, West Midlands	17
Manchester and District, North West	102
Manchester 1926, North West	61
Manchester Methodist, North West	93
Martlet HA, London South	25
Medway Churches HA, London South	84
Mercian HSL, West Midlands	95
Merseyside IMP HSES, Merseyside	113
Metropolitan HT, London North	68
Moseley & District, West Midlands	8
Mosscare HA, North West	66
Muir Group HA, North West	34
New Islington & Hackney, London North	91
Newcastle upon Tyne HAL, North East	77
Newlon HT, London North	91
Nina West Homes, London North	62
Normid HAL, West Midlands	96

Association Name and Operational Area	*HMA £ per unit*
North British HA, North West	25
North Sheffield HAL, North East	113
Notting Hill HT, London North	91
Paddington Churches HAL, London North	84
Phoenix HAL, North East	6
Pierhead HA, Merseyside	110
Portsmouth HA, West	112
Presentation HA, London South	91
Princes Park HSG Co-Op, Merseyside	124
Raglan HA, West	62
Railway HA & Ben. Fund, North East	90
Railway Street Co-Op, North East	37
Ridings HAL, North East	118
Rodney HA, Merseyside	96
Salford Community, North West	118
Servite Houses, London North	88
Shackleton HA, London South	77
Shepherds Bush HAL, London North	90
Sir Oswald Stoll Found. London North	91
Soho HAL, London North	91
Solon South West HA, London South	100
Solon Wandsworth HA, London South	83
South East Lancs HA, North West	38
South London FHA, London South	90
South Yorkshire HAL, North East	113
St. Helens HA, Merseyside	74
St. Marylebone HA, London North	91
St. Pancras HA in Camden, London North	54
St. Philips HSL, West Midlands	61
St. Vincents Manchester, North West	18
Staffordshire HAL, West Midlands	94
Stoke on Trent, West Midlands	30
Stonham HA, London South	118
Sunderland River Co-Op, North East	56
Tennant HT, London North	83
Thames HA, London South	118
Third Collingwood, West	67
Three Rivers HAL, North East	48
Threshold Single Per, London South	91
Toxteth Park HSG Co-Op, Merseyside	131
Two Castles HAL, North West	61
United Kingdom HT, London North	91
United Reformed Church, London North	26
Venture HA, Merseyside	90
Walbrook HAL, East Midlands	114
Wandle HA, London North	81
Warrington HA, Merseyside	54
Waterloo HAL, West Midlands	92
Wearmouth Co-Op, North East	57
West Pennine HA, North West	118
Womens Pioneer HL, London North	63
York HA, North East	96
Young Persons HA, MER	109

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish in local newspapers the list of petrol stations at which unleaded petrol may be purchased.

Mr. Moynihan: I will be delighted to make the latest list, and a new map produced by the Department, available to any newspaper or organisation which will publish it.

Radon

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will urgently bring forward legislation requiring new and existing houses to be protected from the ingress of radon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The building regulations already provide sufficient powers to regulate the construction of new buildings. For existing buildings we are considering what action needs to be taken, but it is unlikely that new legislation will be needed.

Departmental Cars

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Mini and Renault 4 cars held by his Department in store have been sold in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Chope: There are no Minis or Renault 4s held in store. Since 1982, the earliest year for which records are available, the Crown Suppliers have disposed of 45 Austin Rover Minis by auction.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what purpose his Department maintains Mini and Renault 4 cars in store; and how many are kept.

Mr. Chope: The Crown Suppliers — an operating trading fund of the Department of the Environment — have no Minis in store. They have six Austin Rover Minis on hire to, and operated by, Government Departments, and hold two as operational reserves. No Renault 4s are held.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual cost to his Department of maintaining Mini and Renault 4 cars, including respectively the cost of *(a)* rental and *(b)* updating Ministry of Transport tests.

Mr. Chope: The estimated annual cost of repair and maintenance for the Austin Rover Minis currently operated by the Crown Suppliers is £2,800 pa—£350 per vehicle. There are no Renault 4s operated by the Department. There are no rental costs and costs of Ministry of Transport tests are £87·50.

Charitable Land (Change of Use)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued regarding the status of land originally donated for charitable purposes when applications are made for change of use.

Mr. Waldegrave: No guidance is necessary. The planning system determines whether proposed changes in the use of land are acceptable in the public interest. Planning permission granted under the Town and Country Planning Act does not override restrictions on the use of land imposed under other legislation or by other means.

Water Companies

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many water companies are currently partially or wholly owned by foreign interests in the United Kingdom; and what percentage of ownership this represents.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not available.

Melton Borough Council

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to the reply by the joint Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 20 April, *Official Report*, column *824*, he will now give details of the information he has received from his regional office in Nottingham regarding the level of rate set for two successive financial years by the Melton borough council.

Mr. Chope: Information on local rates is collected centrally, not by regional offices. Listed below are the rates levied in Melton in the last two years, from which it will be seen that the district rate for Melton borough council has been zero in both years. The local rate has been made up entirely of special expenses in Melton Mowbray and parish precepts.

	1987-88 (p)	*1988-89 (p)*
District rate	0·00	0·00
Special district expenses	2·61	4·06
Average parish precept	1·52	1·76
Local rate	4·13	[1]5·82
Leicestershire C.C. precept	199·30	[2]221·20
General rate	203·43	[3]227·02
Domestic rate	184·93	[4]208·52

[1] 40·9 per cent. increase.
[2] 11·0 per cent. increase.
[3] 11·6 per cent. business increase.
[4] 12·8 per cent. domestic increase.

Dotterels

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the increase in the ringing of dotterels.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* The increase in ringing results from a study commenced in May 1987 by the Nature Conservancy Council to assess the impact of tourism, grazing and other factors on the dotterel's mountain habitats, with the aim of determining the vulnerability of the breeding population to these pressures and the species lifespan and breeding behaviour.

Ringing is carried out by harmless and well-tested techniques, under licences granted by the NCC under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy with regard to the ringing of dotterels and their chicks by professional ringers.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* The dotterel appears on annex 1 of the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds as a species requiring special conservation measures concerning its habitat. The colour-ringing of a small proportion of birds is a vital part of a study by the Nature Conservancy Council, commencing in May last year, to provide a sound scientific basis for the implementation of our obligations under the directive.

Housing (East London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *825*, he will state the name of the consultants studying the scope for housing development in east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consultant has not yet been appointed. Invitations to tender for the contract will be sent out shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *825*, he will more closely identify the sites in Newham under consideration for housing development, giving *(a)* the acreage, *(b)* the current ownership pattern and *(c)* the time scale envisaged from consultancy to commencement for the building projects and *(d)* the likely financial package involved.

Mr. Waldegrave: Further information on the general areas to be covered by the studies will be published shortly. The consultant who is appointed to undertake the study will be asked to report on the sites within each area, including those matters raised by the hon. Member.

TRANSPORT

London Underground (Policing)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what discussions have recently taken place between the Metropolitan police, London Regional Transport and the British Transport police concerning policing of the London Underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Metropolitan police and the British Transport police liaise closely at all levels on the policing of the London Underground. London Regional Transport is represented on the British Transport police committee and staff of London Underground Limited are in constant contact with British Transport police officers on operational matters.

Vehicle Testing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to undertake a major review of the MoT test certificate procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A review of the MoT testing scheme was completed last year.

Recommendations relating to technical standards and disciplinary action are being discussed with the motor trade. These will lead to significant improvements to the standard of testing.

Other measures already introduced include improvements to the security printing of MoT certificates and tighter security at MoT garages. The Department has improved its information about trading standards offences so that MoT examiners who are convicted of such offences can be dealt with under the Department's disciplinary arrangements.

In total MoT authorisation was withdrawn from 127 garages last year compared with 73 in the previous year. We are continuing to discuss with the trading standards organisations further measures to combat fraudulent use of test certificates.

Motor Trade (Abuses)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received with regard to the

Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards report "Tackling Abuses in the Motor Trade" of October 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from hon. Members. The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs and I discussed many of the issues covered in this report with the Director General of Fair Trading, motor trade representatives and others on 15 December 1987. We agreed the desirability of amending section 60 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 to make it easier for trading standards officers to deal with sellers of unroadworthy vehicles. The LACOTS is considering our suggestions about the possible extension of trading standards officers' powers to inspect cars on garage forecourts. DVLC officials are contributing to Office of Fair Trading investigations into action against "clocking" of used cars.

Dual Carriageways (Central Reservations)

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in the last 10 years gaps in the central reservation of dual carriageway trunk roads have been closed in spite of objections being raised to the advertised proposals; and in how many of these instances a public inquiry was held before any ministerial decision was made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret that this information is not available. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Near Misses

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further action he is taking to reduce the risk of near misses of airliners in British airspace and at British airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Action to reduce the risk of air misses in United Kingdom airspace is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority is wholly responsible for aviation regulation and (with the Ministry of Defence) for air traffic management in the United Kingdom. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the answer given by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), on 18 April 1988, at columns *532-34*.

Ambulances

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to bring private ambulances within the purview of the traffic commissioners by abolishing the right of such ambulances to operate on a restricted public service vehicle licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no need for such legislation. Restricted PSV licences are issued by the traffic commissioners. The holders are subject to obligations (for example, in respect of maintenance) comparable to those required under a standard licence.

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what way his Department will participate in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link due to take place in September and October 1988; how many staff are allocated to this task; how much such participation is estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One person in the Department has been invited to take part in Exercise Strong Link. The estimated cost is £173. Arrangements have also been made for some exercise activities to take place, at no cost to the Department, at sites occupied by public sector transport undertakings.

King's Cross and St. Pancras

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals British Rail have submitted to him in respect of King's Cross and St. Pancras stations.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Dial-a-ride

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect deregulation of transport in London will have on the future of dial-a-ride schemes.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the expansion of dial-a-ride; and what changes in funding are likely during the next 12 months.

Mr. David Mitchell: We look to London Regional Transport for advice on the future development of the dial-a-ride scheme in London, which has considerably expanded in recent years. Funding this year is 50 per cent. higher than three years ago. We are encouraged by LRT's continuing efforts to secure greater cost-effectiveness and enhanced levels of service.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to announce his policy towards the funding of the dial-a-ride schemes beyond April 1989.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport's bids for funding the London dial-a-rides beyond April 1989 will be considered in the normal way in the investment and financing review.

Ammunition Lorries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce regulations to ensure that ammunition lorries are escorted by trained Ministry of Defence Police or military personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new regulations will provide for drivers of lorries carrying high explosive ammunition to be accompanied by a competent person. The arrangements for movement of military ammunition will be a matter for decision by the responsible authorities.

Rolling Stock and Locomotives

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information and details of specifications for new

investment on *(a)* rolling stock and *(b)* locomotives are required by and sent to his Department for consideration before approval is given for capital expenditure to be incurred.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR's investment submissions to Ministers are supported by copies of the appraisals BR uses for its own internal consideration of proposals. These normally include an analysis of the problem identified and the objective of the investment; a business background; a description of options; major assumptions and inputs; a financial evaluation (including sensitivity tests); and non-financial considerations.

Herald of Free Enterprise

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about lorries and parts of lorries recovered from the Herald of Free Enterprise in connection with their roadworthiness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* None of which I am aware.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that vehicles recovered from the Herald of Free Enterprise conform with vehicle inspectorate construction and the regulations before being allowed on the road again.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* The law requires this already.

Public Carriage Office

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why delays in inspections for roadworthiness at the Public Carriage Office are increasing; and what steps he is taking to eliminate the problems to drivers and owners of black cabs and to the residents of Penton street being caused by these delays.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The operation of the Public Carriage Office is the responsibility of an assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. I understand that the March peak in the number of vehicles submitted for relicensing and the early Easter holiday have caused a temporary build-up. The PCO has taken short-term steps to deal with the backlog, and longer-term measures are in hand to improve the quality of the vehicles being submitted and the ways in which they are tested, particularly by the introduction of a booking system.

DEFENCE

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning low flying over Wales.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 February 1988 and 19 April 1988 the Ministry of Defence received 83 inquiries or complaints from Wales about low-flying military aircraft.

Procurement Contracts

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of defence procurement contracts placed by his Department during the last full financial year.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the financial year 1986-87, the latest period for which full information is available, the total value of headquarter contracts placed by my Department was £9·3 billion.

Personnel (Location)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of armed services personnel are stationed in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* each of the English regions and *(d)* elsewhere.

Mr. Freeman: At 30 June 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the percentages of the total strength of the armed services stationed in each of the areas listed were as follows:

	Percentage
Wales	1·9
Scotland	6·2
England—Total	59·9
North	0·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	4·5
East Midlands	4·1
East Anglia	5·0
South East	27·2
South West	15·2
West Midlands	2·7
North West	0·5
Elsewhere	32·0

Child Care

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday and/or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence has no child care provision at present for civilian employees. The Department is however encouraging personnel to become involved in the setting up of holiday play schemes.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has considered any proposals for joint production, design or custody of nuclear weapons with any country other than the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom is currently studying the requirement for a successor to its free-fall nuclear bomb. In this context, we have considered with France each country's requirement for an air-launched stand-off missile. Exchanges are continuing with a view to indentifying where British and French requirements might be similar, and assessing what merit there might be in collaboration.

Military Training Areas

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are made for the use of military training areas by *(a)* foreign military units based in the United Kingdom and *(b)* foreign troops and aircraft temporarily stationed in the United Kingdom; whether any payments are made for the use of these facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Bilateral agreements exist with a number of NATO and other foreign forces covering their use of military training areas in the United Kingdom. Detailed arrangements in each case differ, but such agreements may include the waiver of charges where reciprocal use is made by British forces of training areas in the visiting force's country.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts have been awarded to companies operating in the United Kingdom, as part of the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Sixty-three.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts for research and/or development have been awarded to universities and other research institutions in the United Kingdom, as part of the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Twenty-three.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many jobs have been created in *(a)* research institutions and *(b)* universities in the United Kingdom, as part of the strategic defence initiative programme;

(2) what information he has as to how many jobs have been created in companies operating in the United Kingdom, as part of the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Such information is not maintained by the Government.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of contracts awarded to companies operating in the United Kingdom, as part of the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Approximately $54 million.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of contracts awarded to universities and other research institutions in the United Kingdom, as part of the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Approximately $7 million.

Computer-aided Accidents

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to use Viper computer chips in safety critical systems controlled by his Department; what other steps are being taken to avoid computer-aided accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I anticipate that Viper will be used in critical defence equipment delivered from the early 1990s onwards, as part of the Department's continuing work on high integrity computing.

Horseguards Parade (Flags)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the cleanliness of the flags at the entrance to Horseguards parade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Only one representation has been received from a member of the public concerning the cleanliness of the flags at the entrance to Horse Guards parade. Every effort is made to maintain the flags in a reasonable state, both those that are flown continually and those flown only on certain occasions. The flags are cleaned regularly, repaired as necessary and replaced once past economic repair. On certain ceremonial occasions, such as Her Majesty The Queen's birthday parade, a new Union flag is used.

Home Defence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in relation to the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake's Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link scheduled to take place in September and October 1988, he will place copies of the exercise scenarios in the Library; if he will list those *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* health authorities, *(c)* police authorities, *(d)* water authorities and *(e)* others which have indicated their intention to (i) participate in, (ii) give assistance to, or (iii) observe each of these exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is the hope of district commanders that a number of non-military agencies will participate in, assist or observe the military home defence exercises which are taking place this autumn, although the details have not yet been finalised. It is likely that local authorities' participation will be limited to attendance at visitor days. The police are expected to take part in the exercises but the level of participation will vary at the discretion of individual chief constables. There will be some limited NHS involvement, with ambulance services and voluntary aid societies taking part in a number of the exercises. Water authority assistance is limited to the provision of a number of sites which will be used, at no cost to the authorities, to practise key point guarding. Planning is continuing for the participation of appropriate fire services, Customs and Excise officials, port and transport police. It is not our practice to release details of exercise scenarios.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military home defence exercises are due to take place in *(a)* the Scottish Highlands and *(b)* the Scottish Lowlands military districts during autumn 1988 in relation to those exercises due to take place in England and Wales; if he will place the exercise scenarios in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Bonnie Dundee is the only military home defence exercise taking place in Scotland this autumn. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 4 February. It is not our practice to give details of exercise scenarios.

F16 Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards flights by United States Air Force F-16 aircraft over United Kingdom airspace following recent crashes in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: NATO military aircraft flying in United Kingdom airspace, including United States Air Force F-16s, are subject to the same regulations as aircraft operated by our own forces. Should concern arise about the safety or airworthiness of any military aircraft type operating in United Kingdom airspace appropriate steps would be taken.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in the light of the Danish general election called for 10 May, the meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group in Kolding, Denmark, will now take place as scheduled on 27 and 28 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the light of the election called by the Danish Government for 10 May, it has been agreed that the nuclear planning group meeting due to be held at Kolding in Denmark on 27-28 April will now take place at NATO headquarters in Brussels on the same dates.

Defence Estimates

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the Statement on the Defence Estimates for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend expects to announce the date of publication next month.

Ammunition Transport

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make representations to the United States Army on its action in February in substituting civilian personnel for Ministry of Defence Police for the task of escorting ammunition lorries at Caerwent.

Mr. Freeman: No. I am satisfied with the current arrangements for the transport of ammunition to and from RAF Caerwent using civilian attendants, which meet the provisions of the Conveyance by Road of Military Explosives Regulations 1977.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by how much the cost of employing escorts for ammunition lorries from Caerwent base has been reduced as a result of the replacing of Ministry of Defence police by civilian personnel.

Mr. Freeman: The varying nature of the ammunition transport task at RAF Caerwent means that it is not possible to quantify the overall saving resulting from this change. However, the cost of employing a civilian attendant for this task is about half that of using a Ministry of Defence policeman.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is required for escorts employed for the transport of ammunition by road.

Mr. Freeman: Drivers and escorts of vehicles used in the transport of ammunition by road are given training and instructions to enable them to understand the nature of the dangers to which the ammunition carried may give rise and the action they are required to take in an emergency. Such training and instruction is in accordance with the Conveyance by Road of Military Explosives Regulations 1977.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether civilian personnel have been substituted for Ministry of Defence police or military personnel in the work of escorting ammunition convoys from any bases under his control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Drivers and escorts of vehicles used for transporting ammunition, whether in convoy or not, may be military or civilian personnel according to circumstances. Ministry of Defence police do not normally escort ammunition convoys.

Tain Bombing Range

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 April to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, *Official Report*, column *504*, which services he proposes to seek tenders for at Tain bombing range; what time scale is envisaged for the return and assessment of tenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Tenders will be sought for a range of support services, including quadrant observation, range warden activities, range safety petrol, target maintenance, the maintenance of communications equipment and vehicles, vehicle driving and administration. The supervision of the range will remain as it is at present, under RAF control. Invitations to tender will be issued in May. Any contract would not commence before April 1989.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many centres for chemical weapons production are currently in existence in the United Kingdom; and what is the total estimate of stockpiled chemical weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Mooring Vessels

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when will he be in a position to announce the orders for the range mooring vessel and the two power mooring lighters.

Mr. Sainsbury: Orders will be placed later today with Richards Shipbuilders Ltd. for a range mooring vessel and with McTay Marine for two powered mooring lighters. Upon completion, these vessels will enter service with the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service. I am pleased that it has been possible to conclude the contracts for the three vessels at prices significantly lower than the total of about £10 million originally budgeted for them in 1985-86.

NORTHERN IRELAND

West Belfast (Citizen's Arrest)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there is any evidence to suggest that an attempt

was made to carry out a citizens arrest by those persons who attacked and murdered two soldiers in west Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, several people have already been charged with offences in connection with these murders, and police investigations continue. In these circumstances I cannot properly attempt to anticipate what evidence may emerge.

Terrorism

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has to date on whether there has been a positive response to the continuing advertising campaign in Northern Ireland seeking information about terrorist activity and encouraging use of the confidential telephone service.

Mr. Stanley: Since the present campaign began in January to publicise the confidential telephone service there has been a very positive and encouraging response from members of the public.

Child Care

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday and/or after school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Stanley: In accordance with the commitment in the circular "Equal Opportunities for Women in the Northern Ireland Civil Service" published May 1986, the Northern Ireland Civil Service has considered the provision of child care facilities and in particular workplace nurseries. It concluded that such nurseries could only be provided with a substantial injection of capital to meet start-up costs and a continuing subsidy from Government towards running costs. The use of public funds for this purpose has not so far been considered justifiable in relation to other needs.

However the Northern Ireland Civil Service is anxious to assist staff in making other suitable child minding arrangements and recently introduced a scheme to assist staff to find suitable registered childminders. In addition it is considering with the trade unions the provision of other facilities such as day care for pre-school age children, after-school care for older children, and holiday play schemes.

The home Civil Service part of the Northern Ireland Office, which comprises about 190 staff divided between London and Belfast, does not provide child care facilities, but gives sympathetic consideration to the individual needs of staff with young children.

Education (Maintenance Allowances)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what groups have made representations about the review of educational maintenance allowances in Northern Ireland;

(2) if he will implement the proposals contained in the NUS/USI document on a proposed new educational maintenance allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what arrangements he proposes to make regarding the issuing of a report after the review procedure of educational maintenance allowances has been completed;

(4) how long it will take to complete the review of educational maintenance allowances presently being undertaken by the Department of Education.

Dr. Mawhinney: Representations have been received from the citizens advice bureaux, the NUS-USI, Omagh district council and the Western education and library board. I shall take into account the views of these bodies before reaching final conclusions. I shall also consider whether to issue a report and I will be making a statement later this year.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of payments made to those in receipt of educational maintenance allowance in each of the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 in each of the four education and library boards in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Education and Library Boards	*Number of payments per annum*[1]				
	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	[2]*1987-88*
Belfast	488	442	458	460	558
North-Eastern	864	982	412	436	320
South-Eastern	476	380	310	280	260
Southern	1,848	1,434	964	778	740
Western	2,072	1,500	1,260	1,136	1,120

[1] EMAs are paid in two instalments per annum and the number in receipt of educational maintenance allowances is half the number shown in the table.
[2] Estimated.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of total public recurrent expenditure on higher and further education has been attributable to educational maintenance allowances in each year from 1983 to date.

Dr. Mawhinney: Public expenditure on education maintenance allowances is incurred under the public expenditure programme for administration and miscellaneous services.

The expenditure figures are as follows:

	£
1983-84	523,838
1984-85	518,313
1985-86	363,990
1986-87	316,401
[1]1987-88	264,000

[1] Provisional.

This expenditure, as a proportion of recurrent expenditure on higher and further education (including teacher training) is as follows:

	Percentage
1983-84	0·4
1984-85	0·3
1985-86	0·2
1986-87	0·2
[1]1987-88	0·1

[1] Provisional.

Chief Constable (Report)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a copy of the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland's report for 1987.

Mr. Stanley: A copy was placed in the Library on 12 April.

Maryfield Secretariat

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total sums expended on the Maryfield secretariat by *(a)* the United Kingdom, indicating on which vote it is borne, and *(b)* the Irish Republic; and if he will give a breakdown for each country for (i) salaries and wages of civil servants, (ii) security expenditure for capital and wages, (iii) telephones, (iv) heat and light, (v) stationery and other office costs, (vi) travel and (vii) other costs, for each year or financial year of the secretariat's existence.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* Total costs to United Kingdom public funds of the secretariat to the end of March 1988 since its commencement in 1985 are provisionally assessed at £468,000. I have nothing further to add to replies on this subject that I have given in the past to the hon. Gentleman and others.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing at the latest available date a breakdown of the *(a)* United Kingdom civil servants, *(b)* Northern Ireland civil servants and *(c)* civil servants of the Irish Republic, by grade, religion and sex, working in the Maryfield secretariat.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* No.

Hayshed Bugging

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, pursuant to his answers of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *241*, 28 March, *Official Report*, column *314*, and 31 March, *Official Report*, column *700*, he will outline the policy considerations which underlie his statements that it is not the practice to comment on matters such as the legal authority under which a bug was placed in the hayshed in which Michael Tighe was killed.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* It is established policy that the Government do not comment on matters which might jeopardise national security.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 April 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police officers (Assaults)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department maintains any central record of assaults on police officers in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", (supplementary tables volumes 1 and 11) copies of which are in the Library, of assaults on police officers which result in proceedings for that specific offence.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether police forces in England and Wales are required to maintain records of assaults on police officers; and in what format.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no requirement for police forces to maintain records of assaults on police officers. The majority of forces do keep such records though in differing formats, and HMCI constabulary is now considering with ACPO the possibility of standardising recording practice.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers were assaulted in the execution of their duty in each of the last five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the number of Metropolitan police officers recorded by the force as having been assaulted in the execution of their duty in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1987	4,534
1986	3,400
1985	3,009
1984	2,765
1983	3,150

Asylum

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum were received in each of the last five years; of which countries the applicants were citizens; and which applications were successful.

Mr. Renton: Information on applications for refugee status and their outcome, by nationality, for 1979 to 1984 was published in tables 5A-5F of Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics United Kingdom, 1985" (issue 12/86). The corresponding figures for 1985 (which have been revised since the issue of that bulletin) and 1986 were published in tables 6 and 7 of the corresponding bulletin for 1986 (issue 13/87). Copies of these publications are in the Library. The figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Police Pay

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the percentage increase in police pay for each year since 1974.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The increases in the pay of police officers below the rank of superintendent have been as follows:

	per cent.
1 September 1974	16·7
1 September 1975	30
1 September 1976	[1]5
1 September 1977	10
1 September 1978 / 1 May 1979	[2]39
1 September 1979	13·5
1 September 1980	21·3
1 September 1981	13·2
1 September 1982	10·3
1 September 1983	8·4
1 September 1984	5·13
1 September 1985	7·5
1 September 1986	7·5
1 September 1987	7·75

Notes:
[1] Subject to a minimum increase of £2·50 a week and a maximum increase of £4 a week.
[2] Implemented in two phases, with half being paid on 1 September 1978 and the remainder on 1 May 1979.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present annual salary of a police constable in his or her first year of work *(a)* in London and *(b)* outside London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The basic annual salary for police constables in all forces during their first year of service is £8,352 for those who were under the age of 22 on joining the service and £10,512 for those who were aged 22 or over. All officers receive free accommodation or rent allowance in lieu, which varies from force to force. Police constables in London get an additional £945 in London weighting and £1,011 in London allowance.

Document Loss (Prosecution Policy)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East of 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *423-24*, if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to when a decision was taken not to refer the matter of the loss of documents to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Hurd: No; in the circumstances set out in my reply to the hon. Member on 14 March the question of referring the matter to the Director of Public Prosections did not arise.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish tables in the *Official Report* to show for the area covered by the Cheshire constabulary for each calendar year since 1 January 1979 the number of and types of firearms certificates issued by the Cheshire constabulary itemising *(a)* rifles up to ·230in or 6mm, *(b)* rifles over ·230in or 6mm, *(c)* rifles over ·22in which are of self-loading rifle type, *(d)* rifles over ·22in of

non self-loading rifle type, *(e)* pistols and revolvers up to ·230in or 6mm, *(f)* pistols and revolvers over ·230in or 6mm, *(g)* pistols and revolvers over ·22 in non-semi-automatic, *(h)* pistols and revolvers over ·22in semi-automatic, *(i)* humane killers, *(j)* signal pistols and mini-flare projectors, *(k)* smooth bore guns of under 24in barrel length, *(l)* rifle/shotgun combinations and *(m)* dangerous air weapons and CO2 guns.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics on the issue of firearm certificates are published by the chief constable of Cheshire in his annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library. More detailed information is not held centrally.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in relation to the administration of the Firearms Act 1968 in Gwent as it affects the issue of firearms certificates, how many *(a)* applications were received for grant, *(b)* applications were subsequently withdrawn by the applicant, *(c)* applications were received for renewal, *(d)* applications were subsequently withdrawn by the applicant, *(e)* certificates were in force on 1 January, and *(f)* certificates were granted for each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(2) in relation to the administration of the Firearms Act in Gwent as it affects the issue of shotgun certificates, how many *(a)* applications were received for grant, *(b)* applications were subsequently withdrawn by the applicant, *(c)* applications were received for renewal, *(d)* applications were subsequently withdrawn by the applicant, *(e)* certificates were in force on 1 January, and *(f)* certificates were granted for each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(3) how many shotgun certificates were cancelled in Gwent in each calender year since 1979 inclusive on each of the following grounds *(a)* did not wish to renew, *(b)* no longer required, *(c)* transferred to other forces, *(d)* renewal applications refused, *(e)* deceased, *(f)* failed to apply for renewal, for example, moved, unable to trace, and *(g)* revoked;

(4) how many applications for grant of shotgun certificates under the Firearms Act 1968 were refused in Gwent in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(5) how many temporary shotgun certificates were issued in Gwent in each calendar year since 1979; inclusive;

(6) how many shotgun certificates were transferred to Gwent from other forces in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(7) how many firearms certificates were cancelled in Gwent in each calendar year since 1979 inclusive on each of the following grounds *(a)* did not wish to renew, *(b)* no longer required, *(c)* transferred to other forces, *(d)* renewal applications refused, *(e)* deceased, *(f)* failed to apply for renewal, for example, moved, unable to trace, and *(g)* revoked;

(8) how many applications for grant of firearms certificates under the Firearms Act 1968 were refused in Gwent in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(9) how many temporary firearms certificates were issued in Gwent in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(10) how many firearms certificates were transferred to Gwent from the forces in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(11) how many applications for shotgun certificates resulted in appeals against a decision of the chief constable in Gwent because of *(a)* a refusal to grant, *(b)* refusal to renew and, *(c)* revocation in each year since 1979, giving in each case the name of the appellant and the date of the appeal;

(12) how many appeals against a decision of the chief constable in Gwent relating to applications for shotgun certificates were withdrawn by *(a)* the police and *(b)* the appellant prior to hearing in each calendar year time 1979, inclusive, and in how many cases the certificate was granted;

(13) how many orders of mandamus or judicial review were *(a)* threatened and *(b)* served in relation to appeals against decisions of the chief constable in Gwent relating to applications for shotgun certificates in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(14) how many appeals against a decision of the chief constable in Gwent relating to applications for firearms certificates were withdrawn prior to hearing by *(a)* the police and *(b)* the appellant in each calendar year time 1979, inclusive, and in how many cases the certificate was granted;

(15) how many orders of mandamus or judicial review were *(a)* threatened and *(b)* served in relation to appeals against decisions of the chief constable in Gwent relating to applications for firearms certificates in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(16) how many applications for firearms certificates resulted in appeals against a decision of the chief constable in Gwent because of *(a)* refusal to grant, *(b)* refusal to renew, *(c)* refusal of variation to firearms, *(d)* refusal of variation to ammunition, *(e)* refusal of variation to conditions of use and *(f)* revocation in each calendar year since 1979, inclusive;

(17) how many *(a)* revolvers and pistols, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* shotguns, *(d)* air weapons, *(e)* humane killers and *(f)* flare guns, were (i) voluntarily surrendered and (ii) confiscated, in Gwent in each calendar year since 1979 inclusive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics on the issue of firearm and shotgun certificates are published by the chief constable of Gwent in his annual report, copies of which are available in the Library. More detailed information is not held centrally.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the principal recommendations of the McKay report on firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to his question of 7 March 1988 at column *5*.

Police Officers

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of police officers in service in England and Wales at the beginning of each decade; and what proportion of police officers to population this represented.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information conveniently available, save that for 1987, is taken from reports of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and is as follows:

Position at	*Authorised Establishment*	*Population*	*Police/ Population Ratio*
29 September 1929	[1]57,677	37,884,950	1:657
29 September 1939	[1]63,228	39,950,637	1:632

Position at	Authorised Establishment	Population	Police/ Population Ratio
30 September 1949	71,827	42,750,000	1:595
31 December 1959	78,711	45,386,000	1:577
31 December 1969	107,934	48,826,000	1:452
31 December 1979	118,322	48,970,000	1:414
31 December 1987	122,648	50,079,000	1:408

[1] Does not include women officers.

Computer Hacking

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to amend the Forgery Act, or to introduce legislation in the light of the decision of the House of Lords on 21 April that computer hacking is not a criminal breach of the Forgery Act.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend is awaiting the Law Commission's report on computer-related crime before reaching any conclusion on whether further legislation is necessary.

Alcohol Misuse

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the report of the ministerial group on alcohol misuse on young people and alcohol.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 19 January at columns *646-47*. Action has since been taken to amend the Licensing Bill to tighten the offence of selling alcohol to under-age drinkers, to increase penalties for those found guilty of doing so and to make it an offence for wholesalers to sell alcohol to people under 18. Consultations are in progress on implementing in the United Kingdom the European Community directive requiring strength labelling of alcoholic drinks. The IBA and the Advertising Standards Authority are reviewing in conjunction with the industry their codes of practice on advertising alcohol. The BBC and IBA are reviewing the portrayal of alcohol in general TV programming. Consideration is being given to various longer-term measures.

Cyrille Regis

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be answering the letter from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, sent to his private office of 14 December 1987, regarding the application of registration as a British citizen by Mr. Cyrille Regis; if he expects the application to be completed by 4 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We do not appear to have received the hon. Member's letter. Mr. Regis's application has been granted, and his certificate of registration will be sent to him this week.

Refugees (Hong Kong)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to allocate an increasing priority for resettlement to refugees from closed camps in Hong Kong in proportion to the increasing length of their internment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Policy on the admission of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong remains as set out in the reply my right hon. Friend gave to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and the then hon. Member for Battersea, Mr. Alf Dubs, on 8 May 1987 at column *549*.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each management or computer consultancy contract awarded by his Department in 1987, giving in each case the name of the consultancy firm and the subject of the assignment.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 30 March 1988]:* The following contracts were awarded to management or computer consultancy firms by the Home Office in 1987:

Firm and subject of assignment

Admiral Computing Ltd. — Automatic Handwriting Recognition-technical support.
Arthur Young — Manpower Division — financial strategy review.
Arthur Young — Police National Computer upgrade-user requirement survey.
Arthur Walton and Partner—Procurement in Home Office Science and Technology Group.
Artificial Intelligence — Crime Auto Index-technical support.
Atkins MC.—Rental invoicing.
Bechtel UK Ltd.—Assist in WARC purchasing.
Bell Software Systems—Bootle Bureau Computer-technical support.
Mr. Bickersteth—Writing new test material for CSSB.
BIS Applied Systems — Bootle Bureau Computer disaster-planning report.
Mr. P. Blake — Probation Information Service-technical support.
CAP Industry Ltd. — Automatic Fingerprint Recognition-design support.
Mr. A. Cheers — Probation Information Service-technical support.
Claymore Services — Area Mapping System-technical support.
Computer Services Company — Policy National Computer upgrade-technical-management.
Coopers and Lybrand — Study on the future provision of staff training in the magistrates court service.
Coopers and Lybrand—Staff training in Prison Service.
Data Logic—Crime Auto Index-technical support.
Electronic Facilities Design — Automatic fingerprint recognition-operational requirement support.
Ernst and Whinney ML — Procurement and charging review.
Ewbank Preece Ltd.—Survey for Fire Service.
Express Computers — Financial management system-technical support.
Fraser Williams — Bootle bureau computer-technical support.
Huddart Security Consultancy—Research into major crime investigation.
Mr. A. Iliffe—Writing new test material for CSSB.
International Computers Ltd. — Private Office Correspondence-technical support.
IO Research — Electronic Facial Recognition-technical support/development.
Mr. B. James—Magistrate's court-business analysis.
JSB—Immigration Service-SSADM support.
Lear Month & Burchett — Bootle Computer Bureau-SSADM support.
Logica Space and Defence — Automatic Fingerprint Recognition-design support.
McPherson Associates — Research on reliability of a new

personality test.
MOM International — Project Management-technical support.
Mr. K. Murray — Review of past work of Home Office Unit at CSSB.
PA Management Consultants—Assist with implementation of "Fresh Start" to Prison Service.
PA Consultants—WARC Project.
Procom Ltd.—WARC Project.
RIPA Consultancy Services — Probation Information Service-technical support.
Roston Ltd.—Assist in WARC purchasing.
Scientific Business Systems—Police staff college computer-technical support.
Smith Associates — Automatic fingerprint recognition-technical support.
Software Sciences—Immigration Service-technical support.
Systems Designers—Intelligent Knowledge Based Systems-technical support.
System Designers—Facial Recognition System-technical support.
System Designers — PNCO Interim system arrangement study.
Technical Support Consultants Ltd. — File transfer MCS facility project.
Touche Ross MC — General Ledger System design and implementation.
Touche Ross MC — Police National Computer Upgrade-project management support.
Touche Ross MC — Police Administration Support Unit-business analysis.
VNG Professional Services — Bootle Bureau Computer-technical support.
White Waghorn—Financial Management System-technical support.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount spent by his Department in 1987 on management and computer consultancy contracts, excluding hardware and software purchases.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 29 March 1988]:* The Home Office spent approximately £3,316,000 on management and computer consultancies in 1987.

TRANSPORT

Severn Bridge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the accumulated deficit on the Severn bridge by 31 March.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated accumulated deficiency at 31 March 1988 was about £75 million.

Concessionary Travel

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the level of the administrative charge made for issuing retirement pensioners concessionary travel passes in London; what is the reason for the charge; how it is calculated; by how much it has changed since the last review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The present concessionary travel arrangements for pensioners on LRT services in London are provided by agreement between LRT and the London local authorities. Permits continue to be issued free of charge to pensioners. I understand that certain of the administrative costs incurred by LRT and the Post Office are reimbursed by the participating local authorities who also fund the cost of the concession.

Airedale Route

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects construction work to be completed on stages 1 and 2 of the A629-A650 Airedale route.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The terms of the contracts provide for works to be completed on stage 1 in September this year and stage 2 in January 1989. Good progress is being made. I hope that the roads will be open to traffic in advance of these dates. It is too early yet to give firm opening dates.

Driving Instructors

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to change the current standard of the entry examination for the register of approved driving instructors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are discussing with the national associations that represent driving instructors, ways of making the training and testing of driver instructors as effective as possible. We have reviewed the standard and raised the pass mark required for the initial written knowledge test. Those who propose to teach road skills and behaviour must themselves be thorough masters of the subject matter.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Televising of Proceedings

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will seek assurances from ITN in view of the policy document "ITN Into the Nineties", that current practices regarding use of the outside broadcast unit in televising of proceedings will be maintained, with particular regard to the implications of new policy affecting transmission from the House of Commons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I will draw the hon. Member's concern to the attention of the Select Committee which is now considering the arrangements for the experiment in the televising of our proceedings. The manner in which this experiment is conducted will be a matter for decision by the House.

ENERGY

Nuclear Reactors (Tests)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information has been provided to the European Commission by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in regard to the Environment Commissioner's stated concern to the European Parliament on 10 February that the Commission lacked details of past and planned test experiments at United Kingdom nuclear reactors under European Treaty article 34.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 10 February my officials and the chief inspector of the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate have had discussions with members of the staff of the European Commission.

The Commission concluded that the United Kingdom has not carried out or planned experiments falling within the scope of article 34 of the Euratom treaty.

Coal Industry

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from British Coal with regard to amendments to legislation currently on the statute book, affecting the mining industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Coal Corporation maintains regular contact with the Department on a wide range of issues covered by legislation.

Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirrionnydd Nant Conwy, 29 February, *Official Report*, column *482*, what quantities of unsafeguarded uranium are present at each United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority site; why unsafeguarded uranium is present at non-mixed facility civil nuclear sites; and whether the Euratom and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards authorities hae been informed of the arrangements in detail.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The UKAEA carries out contract R and D work for customers; that for MOD involves the presence of small quantities of unsafeguarded materials at UKAEA sites, details of which cannot be disclosed for reasons of national security. The relevant safeguards authorities are kept informed of movements into and out of safeguards.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirronnydd Nant Conwy, 29 February, *Official Report*, column *482*, on nuclear materials, he will set out the procedures under which civil safeguarded uranium is co-processed with unsafeguarded defence uranium in compliance with the specific safeguards arrangements for civil uranium at Springfields.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A reporting regime has been agreed whereby the necessary movement and accountancy reports of civil material are submitted to Euratom. The inspectors have access to this material for verification in accordance with chapter 7 of the Euratom treaty.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any of the uranium imported from Durban, South Africa, on 28 February 1987 has since been withdrawn from safeguards under article 14 of the terms of the UK/Euratom/International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any plutonium from safeguarded electricity board Magnox reactors has been exported to the United States of America since May 1979 under *(a)* the United States —United Kingdom mutual defence agreement of 1958, under 1959 amendment, *(b)* International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and *(c)* Euratom safeguards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 11 March 1988 at column *362*. Since 1979, there have been no transfers to the United States of plutonium derived from safeguarded electricity board Magnox reactors under the United Kingdom — United States defence agreement.

Aluminium Industry

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the secure supply of electricity at reasonable cost to the aluminium industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received one representation in recent months from the aluminium industry about the cost of electricity.

Berkeley Magnox Reactor Power Station

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has received from the nuclear installations inspectorate concerning safety measures at the Berkeley Magnox power station on the River Severn; what action he proposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 21 April 1988 at column *530*. I have received a copy of the report and the CEGB is now considering its findings.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mozambique

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give for each year from 1979 the level of aid, in constant 1988 prices, made available to Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is given in 1987 prices. This is the latest year for which figures are available.

Gross bilateral aid (£'000)

Year	*£'000*
1979	11,500
1980	7,000
1981	7,300
1982	2,400
1983	2,200
1984	4,800
1985	9,100
1986	7,800
1987	[1]22,800

[1] Provisional

Mozambique also receives aid from multilateral agencies to which Britain contributes.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Voluntary Restraint Arrangements

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington on 30 March, *Official Report*, column *478*, he will set out in tabular form *(a)* the date on which each inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangement listed is believed to have come into effect, *(b)* the date on which

it was first known to his Department and, when appropriate, *(c)* the date on which his Department informed the industry concerned that it saw no case for continuation and *(d)* the date on which it lapsed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information under *(a)*, *(c)* and *(d)* is listed in the table. It is no longer possible to identify the date when the Government first became aware of the arrangements in each case.

	Date Started VRA	*Date wrote*	*Date to end VRA*
Monochrome TVs			
Singapore	1976	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Korea	1979	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Taiwan	1976	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Thailand	Unknown	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Colour TVs			
Japan	1972	1 October 1985	31 December 1987
Singapore	1984	1 October 1985	31 December 1987
Korea	1985	1 October 1985	31 December 1987
Taiwan	1976	1 October 1985	31 December 1987
Music Centres			
Japan	1979	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Korea	1979	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Taiwan	1976	1 October 1985	31 December 1985
Pottery			
Japan	1968	16 November 1987	31 December 1987
Stainless Steel Cutlery			
Japan	1966	16 November 1987	31 December 1987
Korea	1977	16 November 1987	31 December 1987
Pottery Taiwan	[1]1977		
Footwear Taiwan	[1]1981		

[1] Lapsed 1985-86.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangement covering the import of special steels from Spain.

(2) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangement covering the import of music centres from *(a)* Japan, *(b)* the Republic of Korea and *(c)* Taiwan;

(3) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements covering the import of stainless steel cutlery from *(a)* Japan, *(b)* the Republic of Korea;

(4) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements covering the import of colour televisions from *(a)* Japan, *(b)* Singapore, *(c)* the Republic of Korea and *(d)* Taiwan;

(5) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements covering the import of pottery from Japan;

(6) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements covering the import of *(a)* fork lift trucks, *(b)* machinery centres, *(c)* numerically controlled lathes, *(d)* cars and *(e)* commercial vehicles from Japan;

(7) whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangement covering the import of monochrome televisions from *(a)* Singapore, *(b)* the Republic of Korea, *(c)* Taiwan and *(d)* Thailand.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to my written answer today to a similar question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton).

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will estimate the effect on prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes of the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements that covered the import of *(a)* pottery and *(b)* footwear from Taiwan.

Mr. Alan Clark: As explained in the written answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column *478-89*, the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements on imports of pottery and footwear from Taiwan lapsed. It was unnecessary for the Government to carry out a full examination of the impact of the arrangements of prices, employment, domestic output and import volumes.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column 1365, what estimate his Department has of the effects of specific voluntary restraint arrangements on employment, prices domestic output or import volumes; and if he will publish the figures for each of the voluntary restraint arrangements named in his answer on 30 March, *Official Report*, columns 379-80.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* When reviewing the inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangements, estimates are made of the impact of these arrangements on the protected industries, on customers

and the United Kingdom economy as a whole. The advice I received contained commercially confidential information and I am not therefore in a position to make it available. In all cases where the Governmemt advised the industry concerned that it saw no case for continuing the inter-industry restraint arrangement, I was satisfied that the net cost to the economy outweighed any benefit to the industry of continuation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the written answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *478-9*, whether Her Majesty's Government has sought to discourage the United Kingdom footwear industry from signing a renewed voluntary restraint arrangement with the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* No. The position is under review. But the industry is aware the Government also has wider concerns including the net impact of such arrangements on consumers and on the United Kingdom economy as a whole.

Pillows

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) why feather and polyester pillows have been included in the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations;

(2) what evidence he has to suggest that feather-filled pillows and polyester pillows are toxic when burning;

(3) when he expects the BSI flammability committee TCM/30 to report its findings on the flammability of pillows;

(4) if he will list in the *Official Report* any research findings which identify pillows as a particular fire hazard.

Mr. Butcher: Pillows with little or no fire resistance can contribute to bed fires in much the same way as scatter cushions on upholstered furniture can pose a hazard. Accordingly the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations propose identical requirements to improve the fire performance of pillows and scatter cushions. Combustion-modified foams will be the only permitted foam filling in furniture and these ancillary items.

Non-foam fillings in furniture, cushions, and pillows also pose a fire hazard, and the regulations should address this. Feather and polyester pillows are readily ignitable. Account has also to be taken of their propensity to produce smoke and toxic gases. The fillings can give rapid rates of smoke obscuration, and, in the case of polyester, black smoke. They also give off significant amounts of carbon monoxide. In addition, feathers give off toxic gases of hydrogen cyanide and of nitrates.

The British Standards Institution is considering a flammability specification for pillows, but this will not be completed in time to call it up in the regulations.

Public Purchasing

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he estimates will be the effect on industry of the changes in public purchasing provisions by 1992.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Completing the single market by 1992 will mean that purchases by Governments and public bodies should reflect fair competition not national identity. United Kingdom firms will have greater access to a European-wide public sector market which accounts for 15 per cent. of the European Community's gross domestic product, but they should also be prepared for increased competition here.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service (Policy)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Attorney-General what is the policy of the Crown Prosecution Service concerning the institution of prosecutions against police officers *(a)* in cases where criminal charges against others are subsequently dropped and damages are awarded against the police and *(b)* in cases where a defendant is acquitted and subsequently brings an action for wrongful arrest, false imprisonment or malicious prosecution and is awarded damages against the police.

The Attorney-General: The policy of the Crown Prosecution Service concerning the institution of criminal proceedings against police officers follows the criteria contained in the code for crown prosecutors, issued under Section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. Staleness occasioned by the time occupied by earlier court proceedings may acquire particular significance.

Public Records (Copies)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Attorney-General what are the costings figures used, and assumptions made, in respect of *(a)* and A3 copy and *(b)* an A4 copy of a document at the Public Record Office.

The Attorney-General: Photocopies of documents at the Public Record Office are made on A3 size paper only. Reprographic fees are calculated to recover in full the running costs and capital charges attributable to the service, and are based on past levels of costs and volumes of business, with allowances for expected future variations. The current fee of 26p per copy, inclusive of 3·39p VAT, is based on figures for 1986-87 when 683,526 copies were made at a cost of £154,347.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to assess whether the current levels of pay for legally qualified staff of the Crown Prosecution Service are sufficient to maintain an effective service.

The Attorney-General: I take great interest in the development of a proper pay structure for those employed in the Government legal service. I consider that the proposed pay award to legally qualified staff in the Crown Prosecution Service, referred to in my answer of 21 April 1988 to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) is sufficient, together with allowances that are available, to maintain the effectiveness of existing services and to improve the attractiveness of such posts to potential recruits.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General how many legally qualified staff are currently employed by the Crown Prosecution Service; and how many vacancies for such staff currently exist.

The Attorney-General: On 31 March 1988 the Crown Prosecution Service employed 1,311 legally qualified staff as lawyers and had 459 vacancies for such staff.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General what steps are being taken to encourage lawyers to join the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service intends to supplement the existing recruitment arrangements with a number of new initiatives. The current monthly programme of competitions will continue but will focus on specific locations where staffing shortages exist.

In addition to this the other main initiatives under consideration are:

(i) sponsorship of non-qualified staff through legal training,
(ii) the provision of short term contracts of employment,
(iii) improved careers publicity,
(iv) research of the market for part-time working,
(v) secondments from outside organisations.

It is hoped that these initiatives, combined with the recent pay offer to legal staff, will increase the success of the current procedures which have resulted in the recruitment of around 500 lawyers since the inception of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General whether any persons have been appointed by the Crown Prosecution Service to conduct criminal investigations; and whether there are any plans to make such appointments.

The Attorney-General: All criminal investigations are undertaken by the police, who are aided by specialist assistance as and when required.

Within the headquarters of the Crown Prosecution Service is the fraud investigation group, which undertakes the investigation and prosecution of serious and complex cases. The sixteen FIG lawyers control the cases from the outset and co-ordinate specialist assistance on a case by case basis in support of the police investigations. This specialist assistance includes investigative accountants within the fraud investigation group, the companies investigation branch of the Department of Trade and Industry, HM Customs and Excise, private sector accountants, liquidators, receivers and computer experts.

The fraud investigation group has no statutory power to investigate, unlike the newly created serious fraud office, which will be responsible from this month for the investigation and prosecution of the largest fraud cases in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

Nigeria

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column 466, what account she took of the recommendations of the Justice Awoniy commission of inquiry into malpractices and wastages in Niger State that Nigeria repudiate the Biwater loan, blacklist the company for 10 years and report it to organisations involved in the United Nations water decade during the negotiations leading to Nigeria's request for finance to complete the project.

The Prime Minister: The ECGD has seen no evidence that the recommendations of the commission of inquiry which met in 1984 were accepted or acted upon by the Nigerian authorities.

Since then the Niger State Water Board (the buyer), Niger State Government (borrower of the United Kingdom loan) and the Federal Ministry of Finance and Economic Development on behalf of the Federal Military Government have reviewed the project and decided upon a basis for completion of the water scheme by Biwater Projects Ltd. In response to a specific request from the Nigerian federal authorities ECGD has been able to enter into negotiations in respect of support for a further loan to assist project completion.

Hughes Committee

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister whether the dossier of information submitted to her on 1 November 1984 by Mr. Colin Wallace was passed to the police for investigation; and which documents from the dossier were made available to the Hughes committee of inquiry into children's homes and hostels.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 20 July 1987 to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) at column *93-94*.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister what action was taken relating to the case of Mr. Colin Wallace following information forwarded by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in 1986 relating to false job descriptions, psychological warfare and propaganda.

The Prime Minister: Following consideration of the papers by the Ministry of Defence and other Departments involved, I wrote to the Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee explaining that the various allegations made by Mr. Wallace over many years had been fully and carefully investigated and no evidence had been found to substantiate any of them.

Security-Sensitive Posts

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister what is the practice of the Civil Service Commission towards the advertising of security-sensitive posts.

The Prime Minister: Recruitment schemes for which the Civil Service Commissioners are responsible have to be sufficiently publicised to the satisfaction of the commissioners. Normal practice is for these schemes to be advertised in the national press or appropriate professional publications. The information sent to applicants indicates whether security requirements apply to a particular scheme.

Civil Servants (Vetting)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy relating to the renewal of positive vetting for civil servants convicted of criminal offences.

The Prime Minister: In reaching a decision as to whether positive vetting clearance should be given, a

Department takes into account all information which might have a bearing on the person's suitability for access to highly classified material.

Civil Servants (Press Briefings)

Mr. John: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set out the guidelines under which departmental civil servants are allowed to conduct press conferences or press briefings upon politically sensitive matters.

The Prime Minister: Civil servants are advised that in dealing with the media they must act on the advice of their Department's chief information officer who consults Ministers as necessary. Subject to this advice, officials may explain Government policy and give the factual background to it. They may also discuss the balance of consideration which led to a choice of policy. They must not trespass on the responsibilities of Ministers, and at all times they should preserve the political neutrality of the Civil Service. Press conferences or briefings on party political matters should be given only by Ministers.

Freemasonry

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to require all Ministers to disclose to Parliament membership of any Masonic order.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy that any Home Secretary she may appoint in future must not be a member of any Masonic order.

The Prime Minister: No.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to list all those national and international voluntary organisations to which she belongs.

The Prime Minister: No.

Common Market (Funding)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if the provisional agreement made at the recent meeting of the European Council to increase the funding of the Common Market has now been finalised; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Work is continuing on the legally binding texts required to implement the conclusions of the European Council in Brussels on 11-13 February.

Engagements

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others including one with the President of Zimbabwe. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today including one with the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Students Union Presidents

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of student union presidents who are given a sabbatical year by their college or university; and what estimate he has as to the cost to public funds in 1987-88 or the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: The Department does not hold this information.

Further and Higher Education (Codes of Practice)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many institutions of higher and further education have drawn up codes of conduct since the enactment of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he is satisfied that section 43(1) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 is being properly adhered to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The provisions of section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 came into effect on 1 September 1987. Institutions were required to have issued by that date the codes of practice specified by the section; but they were not required to inform the Department that they had done so. The Government plan to evaluate the working of the section in its first year.

Students (Funding)

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional funding will be made available for mature and non-standard entry students at Dundee university.

Mr. Jackson: Financial support is available to students at Dundee university on the same basis as to students elsewhere. Mature students may be eligible for additional allowances. Entitlement to mandatory grant depends on the course attended and is not determined by reference to entry qualifications.

GCSE (Mathematics)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to improve the checking procedures for establishing the accuracy of mathematics examination papers set for the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The GCSE examining groups are responsible for the content of GCSE examinations, including the accuracy of examination papers. The Secondary Examinations Council is responsible for scrutinising the groups' procedures to ensure that the relevant GCSE national criteria are met. The Government look to the groups and the SEC to review procedures in the light of the first GCSE examinations this summer.

SCOTLAND

M8 (Newhouse and Baillieston)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with improvements to the M8 motorway between Newhouse and Baillieston; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have nothing to add at present to my answer to the hon. Member on 4 March, at column *666*.

Baby Care Nurses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of whole-time equivalent nurses working in Scotland in *(a)* hospital maternity units and *(b)* in special care baby units.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that groups of nurses cannot readily be identified from the statistics held centrally on the basis requested.

Midwives

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of whole-time equivalent qualified midwives working in Scotland *(a)* in hospital maternity units, *(b)* in special care baby units, *(c)* in education and *(d)* as community midwives.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible from the statistics held centrally readily to separate midwives working in hospital maternity units and those working in special care baby units. In the table a single figure is given for both groups under the heading hospital maternity units. Midwives working in the community may undertake health visiting and/or home nursing duties. They are shown separately in the table as combined duty nurses.

Qualified midwives in Scotland
Whole-time equivalent at 30 September

		1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Qualified midwives	Total	3,273·7	3,412·3	3,452·8	3,464·5	3,392·4	3,424·2	3,487·0
Hospital maternity units		2,384·8	2,503·7	2,534·7	2,553·6	2,472·1	2,532·2	2,604·0
Teaching		48·4	52·6	60·1	63·1	66·3	59·2	67·3
Community	Total	840·5	856·0	858·0	847·8	854·0	832·8	815·7
Midwives		142·8	154·9	155·4	161·8	186·3	187·2	193·3
Combined duty nurses		697·7	701·1	702·6	686·0	667·7	645·6	622·4

Scottish Courts Administration

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedure exists for the Scottish Courts Administration to notify housing authorities if their tenants have been given custodial sentences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No such procedure exists.

Rents and Rates

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report*, for each district authority in Scotland, for each of the years from 1985 to 1988, showing the average council rent and district rate in constant 1987 prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The tables show the average council house rent and the average domestic rate bill in each local authority area.

Annual average local authority rents at 1987-88 prices

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
SCOTLAND	651·14	709·26	758·03	809·51
Berwickshire	776·25	785·98	797·86	836·48
Ettrick and Lauderdale	741·03	717·59	721·89	721·53
Roxburgh	829·70	894·56	877·00	903·16
Tweeddale	639·55	693·13	683·03	701·53
Clackmannan	657·66	702·26	745·46	807·12
Falkirk	654·81	684·69	722·36	764·33
Stirling	651·04	743·86	783·45	798·16
Annandale and Eskdale	781·09	831·21	857·40	901·17
Nithsdale	647·09	717·16	720·55	783·23
Stewartry	794·49	843·54	855·50	892·71
Wigtown	890·14	911·40	868·56	871·31
Dunfermline	685·24	734·70	764·52	826·03
Kirkcaldy	710·18	756·12	796·79	836·98
North East Fife	779·33	866·57	887·88	957·89
Aberdeen	632·13	685·44	763·96	797·17
Banff and Buchan	777·87	817·94	811·66	852·40
Gordon	768·76	814·07	785·88	798·16
Kincardine and Deeside	733·59	756·09	745·52	744·92
Moray	765·54	766·14	814·54	867·33
Badenoch and Strathspey	761·23	837·90	796·79	840·96
Caithness	713·27	747·50	771·66	820·06
Inverness	743·94	765·52	830·09	896·19

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Lochaber	731·94	780·08	833·56	843·94
Nairn	763·10	801·69	821·02	860·36
Ross and Cromarty	717·82	804·01	824·45	868·82
Skye and Lochalsh	840·88	935·30	778·53	868·33
Sutherland	721·71	773·55	750·15	774·28
East Lothian	698·41	729·19	764·76	795·87
Edinburgh	752·93	730·97	791·71	853·89
Midlothian	667·24	696·45	713·00	731·98
West Lothian	664·09	689·68	703·53	738·95
Argyll and Bute	863·56	835·39	821·53	895·69
Bearsden and Milngavie	686·29	776·97	861·99	903·16
Clydebank	687·38	821·34	887·23	959·89
Clydesdale	685·16	710·85	719·94	779·25
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	718·36	805·27	853·90	899·67
Cumnock and Doon Valley	626·30	663·50	707·61	744·42
Cunninghame	499·03	573·33	676·71	736·46
Dumbarton	529·08	637·48	759·43	899·67
East Kilburn	760·51	848·88	859·57	869·82
Eastwood	648·37	652·01	647·22	678·74
Glasgow	600·28	688·23	760·63	843·44
Hamilton	617·55	698·79	772·48	792·19
Inverclyde	636·89	677·23	692·92	718·05
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	597·31	678·09	720·27	738·45
Kyle and Carrick	686·64	730·05	747·95	774·78
Monklands	638·41	746·81	806·13	845·44
Motherwell	635·18	680·36	733·42	750·89
Renfrew	553·22	627·88	675·65	702·12
Strathkelvin	654·97	774·42	795·92	853·89
Angus	713·79	751·99	757·99	732·98
Dundee	553·62	634·86	707·62	805·13
Perth and Kinross	672·60	705·93	721·70	729·99
Orkney Islands	742·21	791·10	831·49	871·81
Shetland Islands	757·42	817·14	828·14	872·80
Western Isles	872·50	900·65	911·22	930·03

Note: Rent figures for 1985-86 to 1987-88 are as at 30 September, those for 1988-89 are from local authority housing revenue account returns.

Average domestic rate bills at 1987-88 prices

	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £
AVERAGE SCOTLAND	425	438	474	477
Berwickshire	289	312	335	337
Ettrick and Lauderdale	292	317	335	340
Roxburgh	292	320	337	338
Tweeddale	300	328	354	357
Clackmannan	346	364	406	429
Falkirk	363	365	389	408
Stirling	477	502	537	558
Annandale and Eskdale	302	327	347	364
Nithsdale	323	341	361	379
Stewartry	322	338	358	380
Wigtown	282	306	318	338
Dunfermline	412	392	420	441
Kirkcaldy	416	398	420	438
North East Fife	457	449	479	496
Aberdeen City	373	397	390	412
Banff and Buchan	256	290	296	328
Gordon	295	319	355	374
Kincardine and Deeside	301	332	344	378
Moray	255	286	294	321
Badenoch and Strathspey	324	348	388	360
Caithness	237	268	314	296
Inverness	351	388	428	406
Lochaber	291	321	361	340
Nairn	376	406	437	403
Ross and Cromarty	269	332	366	345
Skye and Lochalsh	198	218	248	237
Sutherland	201	224	248	235
East Lothian	469	483	549	603
Edinburgh City	482	476	553	612
Midlothian	460	463	515	565
West Lothian	402	408	470	521
Argyll and Bute	369	389	439	425
Bearsden and Milngavie	762	803	897	847
Clydebank	441	448	471	448
Clydesdale	413	445	504	482

	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	456	480	544	521
Cumnock and Doon Valley	376	389	430	411
Cunninghame	445	466	512	490
Dumbarton	530	550	582	557
East Kilbride	479	503	563	543
Eastwood	719	718	803	758
Glasgow City	473	485	511	483
Hamilton	520	542	557	526
Inverclyde	469	476	515	493
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	436	459	484	463
Kyle and Carrick	514	526	578	553
Monklands	465	487	522	500
Motherwell	460	473	502	479
Renfrew	513	527	561	517
Strathkelvin	545	579	622	580
Angus	332	339	378	405
Dundee City	411	414	451	464
Perth and Kinross	370	370	420	442
Orkney	181	180	181	183
Shetland	199	203	194	367
Western Isles	197	204	206	211

Crime Prevention

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what urgent measures are being implemented in order *(a)* to prevent further increase in crimes involving personal violence in Strathclyde; and *(b)* to give communities and voluntary groups more participation in the prevention and detection of crime, and in the rehabilitation of offenders.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* Through our general support for the police service and crime prevention measures, including the recently launched campaign "Crime—Together We'll Crack It", the Government are committed to creating a climate which minimises the opportunites for crime, including violence against the person. We also give a high priority to the expansion of the number of neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels within Strathclyde and elsewhere.

Council Property (Glasgow)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the level of interest shown by private landlords or companies in assuming responsibility for council property in Glasgow, and if he will name the companies and individuals and the areas they have shown interest in.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Since private landlords or companies interested in assuming responsibility for council properties in Glasgow would be in the first instance approach the owners of the property, I refer the hon. Member to the city of Glasgow district council for information about level of interest. However, as my right hon. and learned Friend announced in the House on 29 March 1988, he is aware that initiatives seeking to involve the private sector in the development of property at Castlemilk and Barlanark are being pursued.

Timber

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the area of land approved for forestry grant-aid in each of the six years to 31 March in each of the conservancies in Scotland; and if he will state the area of land afforested or restocked by the private forestry industry in each conservancy in each of those years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Year ended 31 March and conservancy	*Area of new planting and restocking approved for grant-aid (hectares)*	*Area of new planting or restocking grant-aided by the Forestry Commission (hectares)*
1983		
North	12,166	2,767
East	5,818	2,152
South	6,504	3,007
West	9,931	3,128
1984		
North	10,254	4,800
East	5,932	2,396
South	10,287	3,565
West	7,623	4,387
1985		
North	13,544	4,134
East	3,535	2,356
South	8,803	4,357
West	7,385	4,465
1986		
North	11,768	8,646
Mid	16,421	6,761
South	9,686	3,444
1987		
North	27,219	7,398
Mid	17,140	7,474
South	21,576	3,895
1988		
North	32,864	7,046
Mid	17,823	7,268
South	18,416	8,532

CIVIL SERVICE

Monitoring Surveys

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will seek the advice of a professional physical

anthropologist on the categories of human groups used in Civil Service monitoring surveys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No.

THE ARTS

Expenditure

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what advice he gives to the Arts Council or regional arts associations on the economic multiplier that would be most appropriate to use to estimate the economic impact of arts expenditure.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to make its own case, using whatever data it wishes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of all civil servants were working in Yorkshire and Humberside in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The proportion of all civil servants working in Yorkshire and Humberside was 5·2 per cent. in 1979 and 5·8 per cent. in 1987.

Treasure Trove

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is now in a position to announce his conclusions following the review of ex gratia awards to finders of treasure trove; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: I have carefully considered the report of this review (a copy of which I am today placing in the Library), in consultation with ministerial colleagues in the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and the Office of Arts and Libraries.

Her Majesty's Government accept all the report's recommendations. I am sure it is right that the objective of making ex gratia awards to finders of treasure trove should be to encourage the prompt and proper reporting and handing-in of finds. Finders who act properly and lawfully will continue to receive ex gratia awards equal to the full value of their finds, as assessed by the independent treasure trove reviewing committee, or, if no public museum wishes to acquire them, will have their finds returned to them. Awards will, however, continue to be made only to finders of treasure trove, and not to landlords or employers who are not themselves finders.

Where, as happens in a small minority of cases, there is evidence of illegal activity in relation to a find, I agree with the report's conclusion that the criminal law should be seen as the principal sanction. But, in making decisions about ex gratia awards in those cases, Ministers will wish to take account of criminal convictions of finders arising from the circumstances of a find. Ministers will also wish to consider whether an ex gratia award should either be refused or abated where:

- there is evidence of illegal activity in relation to a find but, for whatever reason, no prosecution has been mounted;
- there was unreasonable delay between making and reporting a find;
- all the relevant circumstances surrounding a find were not reported;
- there is evidence that only part of a find has been handed in;
- there are reasonable grounds for believing that a find was made elsewhere than on the alleged site; or
- there are other factors which it is appropriate to take into account in individual cases.

Decisions about the level of awards in such cases will be taken in the light of the particular circumstances of each case. The intention, however, will be to reflect a balance between the objective of those awards to encourage the prompt and proper reporting of finds, and the need for those awards not themselves to provide an incentive for illegal or improper behaviour.

The report makes a number of recommendations for speeding up the handling of treasure trove. These are designed to achieve a target time of no more than nine months, and ideally less, between the reporting of most finds and the payment of ex gratia awards. I believe that target strikes a reasonable balance between finders' legitimate expectations that they should receive their awards promptly and the work involved, not least by national and local museums and by coroners, between reporting a find and payment of an award. We are taking steps to inform those involved in each stage of the process, and I hope that they will do everything in their power to meet the suggested targets. I shall wish to review performance in about 18 months. I accept the report's administrative recommendations and these will be implemented. I understand that, as also recommended by the report, the Home Office intends to review and update its advice to coroners about treasure trove inquests.

European Monetary System

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the impications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the European monetary system of the completion of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* The Government's policy remains that the United Kingdom will join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system when the conditions are right.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent by his Department on official hospitality in the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* The amount spent on official hospitality was £53,457 in 1987-88.

WALES

Homelessness

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless people in Wales have previously been admitted to mental hospitals; and what this figure represents as a percentage of the total number of homeless persons.

Mr. Grist: This information is not collected centrally.

Privatisation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had discussions with the trade unions regarding (i) water privatisation, (ii) privatisation of the electricity industry and (iii) local government services privatisation legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have formally sought the views of the Wales TUC and the trade unions on the proposals contained in the Local Government Act and on detailed aspects of implementation. I have met representatives of the Wales TUC to discuss the competition provisions contained in the Act, but I have not discussed with the trade unions either water privatisation or the privatisation of the electricity industry. The latter of course is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. The trade unions and the Wales TUC have had the opportunity to comment on the various documents setting out the Government's proposals in these areas.

Towyn (Road Crossing)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to alert all visitors to Towyn that the Sandbank road crossing is unsafe for pedestrians and therefore a danger to the public; and if he will make it his policy to advise such visitors to avoid this area until such time as British Rail erects a pedestrian bridge.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Lady and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to the report of the docklands liaison group of the DE-Manpower Services Commission of October 1987; and if he intends to implement recommendation 3.6 of the report.

Mr. Nicholls: The docklands liaison group report on employment and training services in docklands was prepared for regional management in the Employment Service and the Manpower Services Commission.

With regard to recommendation 3.6 of the report, the Employment Service accepts the need to improve the accessibility of its services to unemployed people in some parts of London docklands.

We are examining the possibility of relocating the Isle of Dogs jobcentre from its current sit in the Cubitt Town library building. But in the meantime we shall be looking to maintain the best possible service to local residents from that site.

We have set up a new-style office at Bermondsey to locate all our services for unemployed people together in one place. In order to bring the opportunities available in docklands to a greater number of people, we are considering a range of outreach measures, including:

—a mobile facility to take services and information about vacancies and other employment and training opportunities to local communities, and

—the use of new technology to provide a wider network of information points, giving access to details of job and training opportunities, across the whole area.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the budget of the docklands liaison group; and if any additional resources to fund the work of the group have been made available.

Mr. Nicholls: The docklands liaison group acts as a single contact point to enable the Employment Service and the Manpower Services Commission to co-ordinate their programmes and services with other interested bodies and the private sector in London docklands. Sufficient funding for this task is made available from the local budgets of the Employment Service and the MSC.

In 1987-88 the Manpower Services Commission spent around £17·3 million on training-related programmes in the docklands boroughs. The Employment Service has a network of nine jobcentres and six benefit offices in the docklands area, employing 280 staff at a cost of about £2·8 million in the last financial year.

Self-Employment

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the trends in self-employment in the past five years.

Mr. Lee: Between December 1982 and December 1987 there was an estimated net increase of 727,000 in the number of self-employed people in Great Britain.

Tourism

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve the data and statistics available to the tourist industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My Department has, together with the British Tourist Authority, commissioned a review of the statistical needs of the tourism industry. We expect the report from the consultants in early summer.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of employment in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* Ealing, North in numerical and percentage terms; what was the comparable figure (i) one year and (ii) two years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The available information is as follows:

Greater London

December of each year	*Civilian employed labour force*	*Civilian employed labour force as a percentage of the civilian working population*
1985	3,861,000	90·6
1986	3,859,000	90·6
1987[1]	3,937,000	92·2

[1] The latest date for which figures are available.

Information for parliamentary constituencies covers only estimates of the numbers of civilian employees in employment, excluding self-employed people, and the unemployed. At September 1984, the latest date for which the figures are available, there were 24,800 employees in employment in the Ealing, North constituency. The sum of this September 1984 estimate and the numbers of unemployed claimants in the constituency at the same date gives a total figure of 28,600.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of employment in each of the last five years in *(a)* publishing, *(b)* printing, *(c)* the record industry, *(d)* the film industry, *(e)* broadcasting (radio), *(f)* broadcasting (TV and cable) and *(g)* hotels and catering.

Mr. Lee: Figures are not available for all the industries specified.

The available information is as follows:

Employees in employment in Great Britain

December of each year	*Printing and publishing*[1] *(475)*[2]	*Record industry*[3]	*Film production, authors, etc.*[4] *(9711, 9760)*[5]	*Radio, Television, Theatres, etc.*[6] *(9741)*[5]	*Hotels and catering (66)*
1983	340,100	..	35,400	68,600	915,600
1984	349,400	..	39,200	70,200	970,600
1985	353,600	..	39,600	73,400	1,010,400
1986	345,300	..	40,600	78,800	1,035,500
1987[7]	342,200	..	40,600	81,200	1,076,900

[1] Not available as separate industries.
[2] Figures in brackets denote classes, groups, and activity headings of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.
[3] Not separately available.
[4] Separate figures for the film industry are not available.
[5] These estimates are subject to considerable potential estimation error due to the relatively small number of employees in the industries.
[6] Radio and television are not available separately.
[7] The latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of employment in each of the last five years in *(a)* the arts, *(b)* sport and *(c)* recreation and leisure.

Mr. Lee: Figures are not available for precisely the categories specified. The available information is as follows:

Employees in Employment in Great Britain

December of each year	*Recreational and Cultural Services (97)*[1]	*Of which Sport and other Recreational Services (9791)*
1983	418,100	263,100
1984	424,700	270,800
1985	448,800	280,300
1986	468,600	287,900
1987[2]	476,200	294,700

[1] Figures in brackets denote classes and activity headings of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980
[2] The latest date for which figures are available.

The figures have not been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created in the northern region in the last three years; and how much unemployment in the region has fallen in that time.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job losses and job gains. Between December 1984 and December 1987 (the latest date for which comparable figures are available) the civilian employed labour force in the northern region has shown a net increase of 42,000. In the same period the number of unemployed people including school leavers has fallen by 39,000. The figures have not been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the measures currently being taken by his Department to provide training and employment in the northern region.

Mr. Lee: The following measures are available in the northern region:

YTS: High-quality training and planned work experience for school leavers.
New job training scheme: training for adults who wish to add to or learn new skills.
Training for enterprise: training for business owners and managers.
Open learning: provides access to training, particularly for supervisors and technicians.
Other adult training: a wide range of full and part-time courses offering training closely matched to local opportunities.
Training grants for employers: practical and financial help for training employees and recruits.
Restart programme: counselling and courses to help long-term unemployed people.
Community programme: community-based work and training.
Jobclubs: coaching, facilities and support for people looking for work.
Jobstart allowance: helps long-term unemployed people back into work.
Community industry: work experience for disadvantaged young people.
Travel to interview scheme: financial help for those who need to travel to job interviews.
Jobshare: an incentive to employers to create part-time jobs.
Voluntary projects programme: experience from working on voluntary projects.
Enterprise allowance scheme: financial help for unemployed people wishing to become self-employed or start their own business.
Small firms service: free information and counselling for new or existing small businesses.
Tourism: advice and financial support for tourism projects.
Loan guarantee scheme: guarantees for bank loans made to businesses.
Special needs: specific help for the disabled and ethnic minorities.
All these measures are listed in the "Action for Jobs" booklet, available from any of my Department's offices.

My Department is the lead Department in the Tyne and Wear city action team, set up to assist with regeneration

in the Tyne and Wear area, and in a co-ordinating team in Cleveland, and is also participating in task forces in Hartlepool and Middlesbrough.

Youth Employment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are being considered to boost youth employment prospects in Houghton and Washington.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply Monday 25 April]:* The employment prospects of young people in Houghton and Washington as elsewhere are being boosted by the high quality training and work experience offered by YTS. From September, the Government are extending their guarantee of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in work or further education. As a result, no young person under 18 need be unemployed.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the Labour force in part-time employment were in receipt of family income supplement at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

Part-time work is defined, in the employment statistics, as 30 hours a week or less. Family income supplement was normally available only to those working at least 30 hours a week. However, single parents could claim FIS if working not fewer than 24 hours a week. It is estimated that in March 1986 (the latest date for which information is available) single parents working 24 to 29 hours a week and receiving FIS represented under 1 per cent. of all employees working 30 hours a week or fewer (including those working fewer than 24 hours).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

76. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's contribution to the cost of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus; and what proportion of the contingent is manned by British forces.

Mrs. Chalker: Figures for the financial year 1987-88 are incomplete. The outturn for 1986-87, the last year for which figures are available, was £20,169,394 net of recoveries. The British contingent is, according to the latest available figure, 741 officers and men out of a total United Nations force in Cyprus of 2,122.

Warsaw Pact (Military Data)

77. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent exchanges of military data on (i) conventional force deployments and (ii) battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons have taken place with the Warsaw pact.

78. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent exchanges of military data on (i) conventional force deployment and (ii) battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons have taken place with the Warwaw pact.

Mr. Mellor: At the Stockholm conference on confidence and security building measures NATO delegations proposed exchanges of information on conventional force levels and dispositions. Warsaw pact delegations rejected this proposal. The September 1986 Stockholm agreement is therefore limited to exchanges of information on certain military activities in the field.

As for nuclear weapons, the United States and the Soviet Union have exchanged information on systems covered by the intermediate nuclear forces treaty. We and other NATO Governments regularly publish detailed information on both our conventional and nuclear capabilities. We have passed this information to Warsaw pact representatives during arms control discussions and urged them to reciprocate. So far they have not done so.

Namibia

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any meetings with, made approaches to, or received approaches from, the Transitional Government of National Unity in South West Africa—Namibia since 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not recognise the Transitional Government of National Unity. However, on 5 February 1987 I met Mr. Shipanga and Mr. Katjiuonga in their capacity as leaders of internal Namibia parties.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Transitional Government of National Unity in South West Africa—Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not recognise the Transitional Government of National Unity, nor any unilateral attempt by South Africa to transfer power in Namibia.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is his policy on recent announcements by the South African Government that the South African administrator-general in South West Africa-Namibia is to be given additional powers;

(2) What assessment he has made of South Africa's policy towards South West Africa-Namibia in the light of recent developments.

Mrs. Chalker: We wish to see Namibia independent. This will not be furthered by granting the South African administrator general new powers. What is needed is prompt implementation of the United Nations plan.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any meetings with, made approaches to, or received approaches from, Mr. Peter Kalangula, the Owambo leader, or his representatives, since 1983.

Mrs. Chalker: No, but members of the British embassy, including the ambassador, maintain contact with Mr. Kalangula. Most recently Her Majesty's ambassador saw Mr. Kalangula in Windhoek last month.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on Mr. Kalangula's position with regard to attempts to find a political solution in South West Africa-Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We commend Mr. Kalangula's support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 435.

South West Africa People's Organisation

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any meetings with, made approaches to, or received approaches from the South West Africa People's Organisation, since 1983.

Mrs. Chalker: Meetings with SWAPO representatives take place from time to time. Most recently I met Mr. Sam Nujoma on 26 October 1987.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government policy towards the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: SWAPO is a party to the negotiations for a Namibian settlement. We do not recognise its claim to be the
"sole authentic representative of the Namibian people"
and we oppose its use of violence.

Chile

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is considering sending observers to monitor the plebiscite in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We will consider whether to send observers to the plebiscite if invited to do so by the Chilean Government.

Israel

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy towards the action of the Israeli Government on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the weekend beginning 15 April.

Mr. Mellor: We deplore the deaths and injuries inflicted on 16 and 17 April and again call on the Israeli authorities, pending their withdrawal, to administer the occupied territories in accordance with international law and human rights standards.

Israel (Nuclear Weapons)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the conviction in the Israeli courts of Mordecai Vanunu on charges of leaking secrets of the Israeli nuclear weapons production facility at Dimona, he will initiate a renewed evaluation of Israeli nuclear weapons capability.

Mr. Mellor: No. Israel's ambiguous position will continue to give rise to suspicion until it signs the non-proliferation treaty and opens its nuclear facilities to international inspection.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, 31 March, *Official Report*, column *628*, as corrected on 12 April, *Official Report*, column *34*, on representations made to the Israeli Government to sign the non-proliferation treaty, what response was received in October 1987; and if any further communication took place as a result.

Mr. Mellor: The permanent under-secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was told at the talks referred to by the hon. Member that the Israeli Government saw no prospect of Israeli signature of the non-proliferation treaty before the conclusion of a general peace settlement in the region. We have received a similar response, most recently in April, when we have raised the non-proliferation treaty with the Israeli Government.

Nuclear Materials (Safeguards)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for safeguards arrangements under the 1970 treaty of Almelo, between the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany, of plans for URENCO to collaborate with Duke Power Company of the United States of America on a nuclear fuel plant in the United States of America.

Mrs. Chalker: If these plans come to fruition, the Governments of the United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany and Netherlands will ensure that appropriate safeguards procedures are applied at any facility constructed in the United States pursuant to article VII of the treaty of Almelo.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what safeguards arrangements exist to cover nuclear materials processed by the Anglo-Dutch-Federal German URENCO company for Boston Edison Co. and Sacramento Municipal District Utility in the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

Material processed by URENCO in the United Kingdom is subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA agreement. Similar arrangements apply to URENCO Dutch and German plants.

Western European Union

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made in his discussions relating to the enlargement of the Western European Union to include Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Mellor: The Western European Union ministerial meeting in the Hague on 18-19 April invited Spain and Portugal to open discussions on how they would meet the obligations of Western European Union membership contained in the modified Brussels treaty and the Western European Union platform.

Malaysia

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei from 5 to 10 April. We enjoy close and developing relations with all three countries. In Malaysia he had valuable discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Minister for Education on bilateral links and a range of regional and international issues.

As part of our common stand on drugs issues, we agreed in principle to work for a reciprocal agreement on the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets.

Tigre and Eritrea

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion he or his ministerial colleagues has had with the Ethiopian government and others about resolving peacefully the conflicts in Tigre and Eritrea; and what is his assessment of the prospect of peace talks taking place in either area, as a result of United Nations or EEC initiatives.

Mrs. Chalker: The most recent occasions were when I visited Ethiopia in April 1987 and when my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development did so in January this year. My hon. Friend had planned to return this month but has postponed his visit at the request of the Ethiopian Government.

We have also discussed the conflicts in Tigre and Eritrea with our European partners. The Community agreed a declaration last week urging a peaceful solution. We earnestly hope that all parties in this tragic situation will put humanitarian before military considerations.

Defence Equipment (Sales)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arms sales are under way to Israel's Arab neighbours; and whether he proposes to resume arms sales to Israel.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our practice to disclose details of sales of defence equipment overseas. We maintain restrictions on arms sales to Israel because of the continuing Israeli military presence in Lebanon.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek a further opportunity of raising with the Soviet Foreign Minister the plight of the long-term refuseniks Michael Kremen, Boris Chernobilsky and Oscar Menoelev, who are still waiting for exit visas.

Mr. Mellor: Michael Kremen and Boris Chernobilsky are among those cases about which we have expressed concern to the Soviet authorities. We shall continue to take suitable opportunities to raise these cases, together with that of the Mendeleyevs and others about which representations have been made to us. Bilateral talks on human rights between officials, which we hope will take place soon, will be one such opportunity.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is being made publicly available by Her Majesty's Government on protection and decontamination equipment for those affected by chemical weapon attacks in northern Iraq.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our practice to make such information available publicly. Information or equipment suitable for protection or decontamination is available from commercial sources although the supply of any such equipment from the United Kingdom to Iran or Iraq would be subject to export control. With our agreement a number of chemical weapon victims have received private medical treatment in the United Kingdom.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wheat and Barley

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what would be the effect on the United Kingdom intervention price of *(a)* wheat and *(b)* barley of a devaluation of the green pound by: *(a)* 5 per cent., *(b)* 9 per cent., and *(c)* to parity.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Feedwheat and barley have the same intervention price of 170·47 ecu per tonne which, at the present green rate, is equivalent to £111·85 per tonne.

Devaluations sufficient to reduce the cereals monetary compensatory amount by the amounts specified and to parity would give the following intervention prices:

(a) £116·99 per tonne
(b) £121·46 per tonne
(c) £127·29 per tonne

European Community (Assistance to Farmers)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Ministry has as to the assistance given by other European Community Agriculture Ministers to their farmers; and if he will make a statement setting out the comparisons between aid provided in other European Community countries and the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: Responsibility for ensuring that national aids are in conformity with the treaty of Rome rests with the European Commission, and member states are required to notify such aids to it for approval.

When we are informed of a national aid which appears to contravene Community law we do not hesitate to bring the matter to the attention of the Commission.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the sheepmeat production ceiling for the United Kingdom in 1988-89 set by the European Community; what it was in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Community has not set sheepmeat production ceilings for either year. However, agreement has been reached on a budgetary stabiliser for this sector, as for many other CAP commodities. This is to be based on maximum guarantee thresholds set at the 1987 ewe flock in Great Britain and the rest of the Community and provides for 1988 and beyond a 1 per cent. cut in the basic and derived support prices for sheepmeat for each 1 per cent. overshoot in the MGLs. The detailed regulations are being finalised in discussions in the Council and elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes have been announced by the European Commission in the mechanism for calculating the premium payments on ewe headage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In its proposals for the review of the sheepmeat regime, the European Commission envisages new methods of calculating annual ewe premia throughout the Community based on EC-12 market prices. No decisions have yet been taken on these or other aspects of the Commission's proposals.

New Zealand (Lamb Imports)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position regarding New Zealand's lamb imports under the forthcoming general agreement on tariffs and trade talks.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In its proposals for reform of the EC's sheepmeat regime, the Commission has proposed discussions with third countries with a view to stabilising their import quantities of both frozen and chilled products, and of improving prices. The trade is currently controlled by voluntary restraint agreements negotiated between the EC and the main third countries. These set annual import quantities in exchange for a halving of the EC import duty to 10 per cent. When the Commission has developed a draft mandate for these discussions, we shall study it closely.

Lean Meat Prediction System

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to follow the example of the Dutch Government and finance the adoption of the Fat-O-Meater lean meat prediction system by the processing industry in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The optical probe, already widely used in the United Kingdom, will be authorised for use here under the EC Pig Carcase Grading Regulations, which will take effect on 1 January next year. Slaughterhouses will, therefore, be able to continue to use their existing equipment for the lean meat prediction of pig carcases which will be required by these regulations.

Pig Industry

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from representatives of the British pig industry regarding their current economic situation.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are keeping in close touch with representatives of the pig producers over the weak state of the market and monetary compensatory amounts. In recent weeks prices appear to have stabilised, while United Kingdom pigmeat MCAs have fallen from −10·9 to −6·1 per cent. due to the strengthening of sterling. Our objective continues to be the elimination of United Kingdom MCAs in this sector.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether environmental health officers throughout Staffordshire have been advised to look out for radioactive sheep from Cumbria and north Wales in the 1988 lambing season.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* In line with arrangements agreed with district and county councils, my officials have kept the chief emergency planning officer of Staffordshire county council fully informed about the introduction and development of the scheme under which sheep may be moved out of the restricted areas of Cumbria and north Wales. This includes details of the arrangements for this season's lambs. It is for the authority itself to ensure that the information reaches all the appropriate council officials within the county.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to introduce the sample monitoring for radioactivity of sheep which have been moved from Cumbria and north Wales to Staffordshire for further fattening.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Additional sample monitoring is unnecessary. Sheep moved out of the restricted areas of Cumbria and north Wales must either already have satisfied a monitoring test or been paint-marked to show that they may not yet be slaughtered. These marked sheep will be released for slaughter only when national re-monitoring data show that it is safe to remove the restriction on all sheep painted with the particular colour.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications were made, by parish, in 1986 and 1987, respectively, to the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis for removal of badgers; and how many were granted.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* The number of applications made to the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis for removal of badgers during 1986 and 1987, listed by parish, are as follows:

	1986		*1987*	
	Applied for	*Approved*	*Applied for*	*Approved*
England				
Avon				
Pucklechurch	1	1	—	—
Cornwall				
Davidstowe	—	—	1	1
Kenwyn	—	—	1	0
Menheniot	—	—	2	2
St. Martin	—	—	1	1
Devon				
Holsworthy	—	—	5	5
Milton Damerol	—	—	3	3
Sutcombe	—	—	2	2
Thornbury	—	—	2	2
Gloucester				
Brookthorpe	—	—	1	1
Duntisbourne Rouse	—	—	1	1
Moreton Valence	1	1	—	—
Somerset				
Rodney Stoke	—	—	1	1
Westbury sub Mendip	—	—	1	1
Wiltshire				
Brokenborough	—	—	2	2
Malmesbury St. Paul without	—	—	1	1
Sherston	—	—	1	1
Wales				
Dyfed				
Llanddarog	—	—	2	2
Llanwinio	—	—	1	1
Total	2	2	28	27

Animals (Tuberculosis)

Mr. Ron Davies To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidences of herd breakdown due to tuberculosis were notified in each of the last five years; and if he will give the information by parish and list, in each case, the number for which the cause was unexplained.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 April 1988]*: Information cannot be provided for individual parishes without disproportionate cost. The table gives the total figures for Great Britain for the last five years for which information is available.

	Dunnet Report			*MAFF 11th Report*	
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Number of new confirmed breakdowns	113	93	90	77	83
Number for which the cause is unknown	23	22	26	24	35

SOCIAL SERVICES

Patient Expenditure (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the average annual expenditure per patient in 1986-87 by the Nottingham district health authority.

Mr. Newton: For patient treatment costing purposes all hospitals are classified into a series of standard types which reflect the principal use to which their beds are allocated and an overall average cost or expenditure per patient is thus not determined. For figures on average annual treatment costs of in-patients and out-patients by type of hospital for the Trent region as a whole, I refer the hon. Member to the Department's annual publication "Health Services Costing Returns" (the latest being for 1985-86)—copies of which are held in the Library. For similar information detailed to individual hospitals and units the hon. Member way wish to contact the chairman of the Trent regional health authority who may be able to assist.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those district health authorities or regional health authorities, which are due to receive money from the allocation for hospital and community health services announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement.

Mr. Newton: All health authorities in England have benefited from the increase in spending on the hospital and community health services announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn Statement. My statement to the House on 16 December 1987 was followed by the publication on 23 December of a circular (HC(87)37) describing how resources were to be distributed among regional health authorities; this was followed in turn by the issue of more detailed initial cash limits to each RHA on 14 January. Allocations to districts based on those cash limits have since been made by regions.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the levels of spending on *(a)* the mentally handicapped and *(b)* the mentally ill in each of the health authorities in the area of the North West regional health authority for each year from 1979 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Newton: Information on health authority expenditure by type of patient is not collected centrally. However, hospital costing returns submitted to the Department do show expenditure on hospitals of different types. Costing returns in respect of community health services show expenditure relating to the major areas of activity only. Thus we have information on expenditure by hospitals categorised as "Mental Handicap" and "Mental Illness", but not on expenditure on the growing volume of activity in psychiatric units in general hospitals etc. or within the community health services. Such costs are not separately identifiable centrally.

The following tables, derived from the hospital costing returns give the expenditure by hospitals categorised as mental handicap and mental illness in each of the district health authorities in the North Western region since their establishment on 1 April 1982.

Revenue Expenditure on hospitals categorised as "Mental Illness"

Expenditure (£)

District	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Blackburn, Hyndburn and R.V.	0	0	0	0	0
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	0	0	0	0	0
Bolton	421,463	435,586	461,313	488,433	597,916
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	0	0	0	0	0
Bury	0	0	0	0	0
Central Manchester	0	0	0	1,420,171	1,658,503
Chorley and South Ribble	0	0	0	0	0
Lancaster	876,038	884,737	923,538	1,254,329	1,304,985
North Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Oldham	0	0	0	0	0
Preston	13,318,178	13,583,528	13,439,427	13,106,404	13,356,038
Rochdale	326,400	369,529	410,166	446,303	84,626
Salford	13,955,531	14,784,169	15,343,857	15,970,384	17,632,609
South Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Stockport	488,102	512,560	555,080	572,547	587,401
Tameside and Glossop	0	0	0	0	0
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0
West Lancashire	0	0	0	0	0
Wigan	0	0	0	0	0
Total	29,385,712	30,570,109	31,133,381	33,258,571	35,222,078

Revenue Expenditure on hospitals categorised as "Mental Handicap"

Expenditure (£)

District	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Blackburn, Hyndburn and R.V.	11,306,933	11,596,281	12,390,289	12,841,570	12,906,979
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	0	0	0	0	0

District	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Bolton	68,307	101,917	109,924	121,225	125,379
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	11,437,991	11,470,320	11,963,090	12,536,561	12,361,525
Bury[1]	0	0	80,416	0	0
Central Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Chorley and South Ribble	0	0	0	0	0
Lancaster	7,915,547	7,961,773	8,538,286	8,737,825	8,999,434
North Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Oldham	0	0	0	0	0
Preston	0	0	0	0	0
Rochdale[2]	340,278	0	428,104	472,163	522,087
Salford	1,230,982	1,564,140	1,636,176	1,662,257	1,791,605
South Manchester	0	0	0	0	0
Stockport	1,502,798	1,624,270	1,787,572	1,786,305	1,872,426
Tameside and Glossop	136,108	139,352	172,553	175,723	160,679
Trafford	0	0	0	0	0
West Lancashire	364,627	373,033	345,164	310,304	150,090
Wigan	0	0	0	0	0
Total	34,303,571	34,831,086	37,451,574	38,643,933	38,890,204

[1] Cambeck Close was reclassified as a Community Mental Handicap Unit from 1985-86.
[2] For 1983-84 only, the health authority included expenditure incurred at Scott House within Community Health Services.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 29 March, *Official Report*, column 445, if he will report on progress within the United Kingdom on implementation of the United Nations world programme of action concerning disabled persons.

Mr. Scott: As I said in my earlier reply on 29 March at column *445* the two reports are by the Secretary General of the United Nations. Report A/42/551 was in response to a request to the Secretary General for information on *(a)* the establishment and reinforcement of national committees as focal points for the United Nations decade *(b)* bilateral assistance relating to projects concerning the prevention of disabilities, rehabilitation and equalisation of opportunities and *(c)* the voluntary fund. Report A/42/561 sets out an evaluation by the Secretary General of the implementation of the world programme of action during the first half of the decade 1983-92.

The United Kingdom Government support the overall objectives of the United Nations world programme of action and takes them into account when developing policies for disabled people. The Government, the statutory authorities and the voluntary sector are involved in the development of policy and services within the United Kingdom for disabled people. We also participate at the international level in activities undertaken by the European Community, the Council of Europe and Rehabilitation International. Therefore, given these involvements, we do not feel that a national committee specifically related to overseeing the United Nations programme would serve any useful purpose.

With respect to overseas aid, rather than contribute to the voluntary fund we support the general aims of the world programme by assisting specific projects under our bilateral aid programmes administered by the Overseas Development Administration. We also jointly fund, with various British charities, rehabilitation programmes and projects to assist disabled people.

With regard to the recommendation of the governing council of the United Nations development programme that a global campaign be promoted to raise awareness and mobilise resources in support of the objectives of the world programme of action, we would like to await specific proposals from the Secretary General on how this could proceed.

Electoral Register (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many voters there are on the new electoral register for the Isle of Wight.

Mrs. Currie: There are 100,785 parliamentary electors on the 1988 register for the Isle of Wight.

Electors

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the English electoral quota for 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: The electoral quota for England—that is, the total electorate divided by the number of parliamentary constituencies—is 69,688 based on the 1988 register.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which are currently the five largest and five smallest parliamentary constituencies showing in each case the number of registered electors on the new registers.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows:

Parliamentary constituency	1988 Electorate
(i) *Five largest*	
Milton Keynes	103,210
Isle of Wight	100,785
East Hampshire	90,013
Huntingdon	89,657
Swindon	89,138
(ii) *Five smallest*	
Surbiton	45,320
Kensington	45,998
Chelsea	46,763
Newham North West	47,814
Hammersmith	47,888

Shenley Hospital

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the future of Shenley

hospital; if there is a closure date; what is the most recent figure for the population in Shenley; and how many patients have been there for more than five years.

Mrs. Currie: The aim of our policy in the mental health field is that every health district should provide a comprehensive range of services for mentally ill people, from long-term in-patient care for the severely and chronically ill to domiciliary support for those who can live near normal lives at home.

The latest figures held centrally for the numbers of in-patients in Shenley hospital is 805, as at 31 December 1986. Figures are not available centrally on the length of stay of resident in-patients. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Parkside health authority for information on plans for the future of Shenley hospital, and detailed local statistics.

Eye Tests

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Wisbech and West Norfolk district health authority had eye tests in the last year for which figures are available; and what estimate he can make of how many would not have received free tests if his Department's new regulations had applied at the time.

Mr. Newton: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the eye tests carried out under the general ophthalmic services. These are the responsibility of the family practitioner committee and it is not possible to provide information for particular district health authority areas. However, in the Norfolk FPC and Cambridge FPC, each of which includes part of the area covered by the Wisbech and West Norfolk DHA, the numbers of sight tests carried out during the year ended 31 December 1987 were 156,122 and 144,810 respectively. When implemented, the provision of the Health and Medicines Bill will still permit NHS sight tests to be provided for children under 16, full-time students under 19, those on low incomes, the registered blind and partially sighted and people with diabetes or glaucoma who are referred for a test by the doctor managing their condition. It is estimated that these groups currently account for a little over one third of sight tests.

Tobacco

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what studies his Department has carried out on the effectiveness of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 in preventing the purchase of tobacco products by children under the age of 16 years;

(2) what evidence there is of levels of usage by children under the age of 16 years of tobacco products of the type he recently announced his proposals to ban.

Mrs. Currie: Biennial surveys are carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of the smoking habits of schoolchildren aged 11 to 16. In 1986 it was found that 89 per cent. of regular smokers in this age group claimed that shops were a regular source of their cigarettes. In the same year there were 17 prosecutions of shopkeepers for selling cigarettes to children. Figures are not available on the use of oral tobacco products.

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what monitoring procedures were set in hand to assess the effectiveness of the voluntary marketing agreement entered into by United States Tobacco International on 18 April 1985;

(2) if he has any evidence of breaches by United States Tobacco International of that company's voluntary agreement with his Department;

(3) what data on unit sales figures and numbers of users are available in respect of those oral tobacco products he proposes to ban.

Mrs. Currie: No special arrangements were set in hand to monitor the voluntary agreement with United States Tobacco International or to gather evidence of breaches, although we are aware of allegations concerning the marketing of Skoal Bandits to children which are the subject of court proceedings. Figures on the use of oral tobacco products are not available.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the size of the budget devoted to the fourth medical and health research programme from European Community resources connected with the use of chimpanzees in AIDS research.

Mr. Newton: In conformity with a recommendation of the European Parliament 5 million ecu have been committed to the European Community's fourth medical and health research programme to support centralised facilities for primates used in AIDS research. A separate figure for chimpanzees has not been identified.

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what help he is giving to local authorities in London towards the costs of providing personal social services for people with AIDS or HIV infection.

Mr. Newton: I announced in February that £2 million is being made available in the current financial year to help towards the AIDS-related personal social services expenditure incurred by those local authorities in inner London where the greatest demands are faced. The borough councils are being informed today of the allocations they are to receive which are as follows:

	£
Hammersmith and Fulham	474,180
Kensington and Chelsea	467,170
Westminster	245,000
Wandsworth	195,000
Lambeth	160,000
Camden	107,000
Southwark	92,500
Lewisham	89,500
Tower Hamlets	60,000
Islington	30,000
Hackney	30,000
Greenwich	27,200

I have been greatly encouraged by the consideration which the authorities have put into their bids and the sensitivity to the special needs of people with AIDS which they show. I hope that, in the light of our response, health and local authorities in inner London will continue to develop, on a jointly planned basis both the services necessary to ensure people with AIDS receive the care and support they need, and local initiatives to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Wakefield Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the reasons for the delay in the replacement of the university of Leeds nominee on Wakefield district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The appointment of members to Wakefield district health authority is the responsibility of the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Social Work

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his assessment of the ability of local authorities with unfilled social work posts to fulfill their statutory duties; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has about the current figure for unfilled vacancies in social work posts in local authority social services departments.

Mr. Newton: Such information is not held centrally, but we are aware of a recent report concerning problems in London. The social services inspectorate, which is keeping the position under review, is seeking to assist London authorities to ensure that staff are deployed to best effect and is paying particular attention to the management of child protection services.

Compulsory Removals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many compulsory removals under section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948 were undertaken during 1987.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of cot deaths in the north-west region during 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986, and any subsequent period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is shown in the table, which gives the total number of deaths at age under one with any mention of cot death, sudden infant death syndrome or similar term on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it was the underlying cause of death, for usual residents of the north-west standard region.

Number of infant deaths with mention of cot death to usual residents of the North West Standard Region 1983-87[1]

Year	*Number*
1983	175
1984	167
1985	182
1986	217
[1]1987	155

[1] Provisional data to end October.

Breast Screening

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what guidance has been given as to whether the proposals of the South East Thames regional health authority in respect of breast screening and assessment centres in the Medway comply with his Department's policy for identifying regional specialties;

(2) what is his policy on whether breast screening service and assessment centres should be a regional service or devolved to combined districts.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's policy for implementing the breast cancer screening service is that regional health authorities should plan their services on a supra-district basis according to the model recommended in the Forrest report, a copy of which is in the Library. The model proposed basic screening units each serving a population of about half a million (equivalent to two average-sized districts) and specialist assessment teams each taking referrals from up to three of the basic units, in order to maintain very high standards for the assessment of the abnormalities detected by mammographic screening, particularly the very small impalpable lesions. Copies of the guidance circulated to health authorities and family practitioner committees (DA(87)14 and EL(88)P/48) have been placed in the Library.

Plans for the breast cancer screening services to cover the whole of the South-East Thames region have not yet been received in the Department.

Medical Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the average waiting time for appeal hearings at each of his Department's medical appeal tribunals within the Yorkshire area.

Mr. Portillo: Reliable estimates of average waiting times for medical appeal tribunal hearings are not currently available. The president of social security appeal tribunals and medical appeal tribunals has advised that a revised management information system is being established for medical appeal tribunals which will enable the accurate measurement of waiting times, but that reliable estimates will not be available until later this year. I would be happy to refer any specific concerns of the hon. Member to the president.

Cancelled Treatments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many planned admissions for in-patients treatment in hospitals within the Wakefield district health authority were cancelled during 1987; and for what reasons.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Wakefield health authority to ascertain whether such information is available locally.

Family Credit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will encourage local authorities to include an application form for family credit when they distribute housing benefit application forms.

Mr. Portillo: Many local authorities already do send the claim form for family credit to those housing benefit claimants likely to be eligible for it. Some local authorities

may not be able to do this for operational reasons but all will be aware of the importance we attach to encouraging the take-up of family credit.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to enable local authorities to disregard the element within family credit assumed to cover free school meals when assessing housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: No. An award of family credit cannot be disregarded in assessing housing benefit entitlement.

Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the recommendations of the committee of inquiry into the outbreak of salmonella at Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield have been implemented.

Mrs. Currie: All health authorities have received copies of the committee of inquiry's report. Consideration has been given to each of the recommendations. Management guidelines have been published on hygiene and building issues, whilst further guidelines on hospital infection control and standard recipes will be circulated shortly.

Prisoners of War (Japan)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received from bodies representing prisoners of war in Japan during the second world war; if he has any plans to change present pension policy for prisoners or dependants of prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We have received no recent representations, and have no plans to change the current long-standing war pension policy for far eastern prisoners of war. Under the war pensions scheme, a war disablement or widow's pension is payable where an ex-service man suffers any disability or illness or dies as a result of service in the armed forces, which includes periods spent as a prisoner of war. The Government fully recognise the great hardship and suffering endured by far eastern prisoners of war and their claims to war pension are given special and very careful consideration. All far eastern prisoners of war are offered a free tropical disease investigation to ascertain whether they are suffering any residual effects of disease suffered whilst a prisoner.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those drug companies which supplied benzodiazepines to the National Health Service during each of the years 1978 to 1986 inclusive; and what was the amount of payments made to each of these companies.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 31 March 1988]:* In 1986, £28·2 million of benzodiazepines were dispensed in Great Britain in the family practitioner services of which £7·8 million were proprietary products. In 1985, the comparable figures were £33·1 million and £14·0 million. Information for earlier years is available only at disproportionate cost and information by company is not available. Companies supplying benzodiazepines to the FPS in 1986 were:

Abbott Laboratories Ltd.
Astra Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Beecham Group plc
DDSA Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Eli Lilly & Co. Ltd.
Farmitalia Ltd.
Fisons plc
Glaxo Group Ltd.
Hoechst Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Janssen Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Leo Laboratories Ltd.
Lundbeck Ltd.
May & Baker Ltd.
Norgine Ltd.
Pfizer Ltd.
Roussel Laboratories Ltd.
Roche Products Ltd.
Sandoz Products Ltd.
Schering Chemicals Ltd.
Searle & Co. Ltd.
Smith Kline and French Laboratories Ltd.
Smith & Nephew Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Steinhard Ltd.
Sterling-Winthrop Group Ltd.
Upjohn Ltd.
Wyeth Laboratories Ltd.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the latest numbers of winners and losers as a result of changes in housing benefit in Alyn and Deeside district council area, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people claiming housing benefits in each housing authority in Scotland.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 April 1988]:* The information available is given in the table. The figures represent the estimated number of benefit recipients in each authority.

The number of unsuccessful claims is not available.

Authority name	*Rent rebates*	*Rent allowance*	*Rate rebates*
Orkney Island Council	778	225	1,236
Shetland Island Council	970	154	1,605
Western Isles Council	1,822	292	4,909
Borders Regional Council	0	0	11,130
Berwickshire DC	1,384	321	0
Ettrick & Lauderdale DC	2,145	450	0
Roxburgh DC	3,000	370	0
Tweeddale DC	750	310	0
Regional Totals	7,279	1,451	11,130
Central Regional Council	0	0	39,034
Clackmannan DC	5,620	260	0
Falkirk DC	16,800	1,030	0
Stirling DC	7,800	1,110	0
Regional Totals	30,220	2,400	39,034
Dumfries and Galloway Region	0	0	16,103
Annandale and Eskdale DC	2,720	335	0
Nithsdale DC	4,050	640	0
Stewartry DC	1,450	250	0
Wigtown DC	3,000	400	0
Regional Totals	11,220	1,625	16,103

Authority name	Rent rebates	Rent allowance	Rate rebates
Fife Regional Council	0	0	41,579
Dunfermline DC	11,716	762	0
Kirkcaldy DC	15,915	1,448	0
North East Fife DC	4,850	1,240	0
Regional Totals	32,481	3,450	41,579
Grampian Regional Council	0	0	52,982
Aberdeen City Council	18,400	5,000	0
Banff and Buchan DC	6,152	499	0
Gordon DC	2,651	722	0
Kincardine and Deeside DC	1,645	490	0
Moray DC	6,500	950	0
Regional Totals	35,348	7,661	52,982
Highland Regional Council	0	0	17,888
Badenoch DC	650	240	0
Caithness DC	1,890	243	0
Inverness DC	3,976	497	0
Lochaber DC	1,574	274	0
Nairn DC	678	143	0
Ross and Cromarty DC	3,596	549	0
Skye and Lochalsh DC	498	306	0
Sutherland DC	1,037	111	0
Regional Totals	13,899	2,363	17,888
Lothian Regional Council	0	0	94,496
Edinburgh DC	31,500	25,600	0
East Lothian DC	7,900	670	0
Midlothian DC	5,850	1,020	0
West Lothian DC	11,080	750	0
Regional Totals	56,330	28,040	94,496
Strathclyde Regional Council	0	0	408,542
Argyll and Bute DC	4,835	1,275	0
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	1,099	79	0
Clydebank DC	7,479	432	0
Clydesbank DC	5,100	250	0
Cumbernauld DC	2,381	63	0
Cumnock and Doon DC	5,511	241	0
Cunninghame DC	13,759	924	0
Dumbarton DC	7,220	570	0
East Kildbride DC	815	193	0
Eastwood DC	1,073	215	0
Glasgow	120,500	23,000	0
Hamilton DC	14,600	440	0
Inverclyde DC	12,100	1,130	0
Kilmarnock DC	10,679	214	0
Kyle and Carrick DC	10,515	918	0
Motherwell DC	25,271	640	0
Renfrew DC	23,100	2,100	0
Strathkelvin DC	5,364	280	0
Regional Totals	289,090	33,174	408,542
Tayside Regional Council	0	0	59,034
Angus DC	7,500	1,000	0
Dundee DC	22,915	3,985	0
Perth and Kinross DC	8,500	1,800	0
Regional Totals	38,915	6,785	59,034
Cumbernauld (Dev C)	4,800	0	0
East Kildbride (Dev C)	7,500	0	0
Glenrothes (Dev C)	4,000	0	0
Irvine (Dev C)	2,400	0	0
Livingston (Dev C)	5,000	0	0

Authority name	Rent rebates	Rent allowance	Rate rebates
Scottish Special HA	47,200	0	0
New Town Totals	70,900	0	0
Scottish Totals	589,252	87,620	748,538

Notes:

1. Derived from local authority housing benefit subsidy estimates for 1987-88.
2. DC = District Council.
   (Dev C) = Development Corporation.
3. Some claimants receive a rent rebate or allowance and a rate rebate. It is not therefore possible to calculate the number of people claiming housing benefit by adding the figures together.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to assist in the funding of the final testing of the HDA method of screening for cervical cancer; what is his assessment of the importance of the HDA procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about funding for a hydrolysed DNA assay procedure for early detection of cervical neoplasms; and what is his Department's current position regarding such funding.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* One of the 13 applications for funding of research and development in the field of automated cervical cancer screening that were reviewed in February by an ad hoc expert working group chaired by the Department's chief scientist was from Dr. Sincock of the Middlesex hospital and related to hydrolysed DNA assay. The expert group did not recommend that Dr. Sincock's project as submitted should be funded by the Department. Officials are now exploring with commercial interests the possibility of a joint funding venture that could pave the way for commercialisation of Dr. Sincock's assay.

Prescribed Drugs (Dependency)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what current reviews his Department is undertaking or has commissioned concerning prescribed drugs which lead to dependency; what advice has been given to doctors and patients on this issue; what estimate he has of the number of people regularly receiving the drug Lorezepam; what information he has as to any side-effects of Lorazepam, Valium and Librium; if he will take steps to establish an investigation into any detrimental side-effects of the drug Lorazepam; what guidelines are issued by his Department to general practitioners relating to Lorazepam; and if he will take steps to encourage Wyeth Laboratories to compensate people who have become dependent on Lorazepam.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The Committee on Safety of Medicines has recently completed a review of the problem of dependence on benzodiazepines, and has issued advice to doctors and pharmacists in "Current Problems No. 21", which is in the Library. The Department is not currently conducting any specific reviews on dependence in relation to other prescribed drugs, but advice on the risks of dependence on certain drugs is contained in the British National

Formulary which the Department sends regularly to all NHS doctors and pharmacists. It is for doctors to decide what advice to give to patients about the risk of dependence on prescribed medicines.

Over 3 million prescriptions for Lorazepam were issued in 1986 by general practitioners in Great Britain. It is not possible to estimate reliably how many patients were involved.

Information about side effects of Lorazepam, Valium and Librium is available in the ABPI data sheet compendium and in the BNF, copies of which are in the Library.

We have no current plans plans for a further investigation into the side effects of Lorazepam. In addition to the guidelines for all benzodiazepines, including Lorazepam, in "Current Problems No. 21" and the BNF, the data sheet provided by the manufacturer of Ativan, the leading brand, has recently been revised to the satisfaction of the CSM.

The issue of compensation is a matter for the parties concerned.

ENVIRONMENT

Telford Development Corporation (Housing)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are his proposals for dealing with the future of those houses which are empty during the planned ballot on the future of Telford development corporation houses;

(2) what are his proposals for dealing with the future of those houses where there is a change of tenant after the planned ballot on the future of Telford development corporation houses but before ownership is changed;

(3) when he now expects to ballot Telford development corporation tenants about the future ownership of their houses;

(4) what are the financial terms for the transfer of Telford development corporation houses to *(a)* Wrekin district council, *(b)* housing associates and *(c)* tenants.

Mrs. Roe: We remain committed to consulting the tenants before any decisions are made about transferring the ownership of the new town housing in Telford, and it remains our policy to respect any individual preferences expressed through the consultation process. It is therefore essential that tenants be given all the information they need to make a considered choice.

In particular, it will be important that potential new landlords present tenants with realistically costed options, and in this connection I have had very much in mind the concern of Wrekin district council that the terms of transfer of the stock should be the same for local authority and other potential purchasers. This would require primary legislation, so transfer will not be possible for some time.

In the circumstances, tenant consultation now would be premature, and it would not be fair on the tenants to ask them to commit themselves now to a change which could not be implemented, perhaps for a couple of years. The best way to reduce the difficulties the hon. Member addresses in his other questions is to reduce as far as possible the interval between consultation and transfer. That is what we plan to do.

Gipsy Caravan Sites

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the location of any official gipsy caravan sites within an area of outstanding natural beauty in England;

(2) if he will list those cases in which a local authority has compulsorily purchased land within an area of outstanding beauty for the purpose of establishing a gipsy caravan site; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The following local authority gipsy sites are in areas of outstanding natural beauty:

Southerham, East Sussex, (South Downs)
Redland Depot, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, (High Weald)
Hawkhurst, Kent (High Weald)
Pendle Camp, Merstham, Surrey (Surrey Hills)
Foster Down, Caterham, Surrey (Surrey Hills)
Chiseldon Camp, Swindon, Wiltshire (North Wessex Downs)
Copperkins Lane, Amersham, Bucks (Chilterns)
Whites Hill, Beaconsfield, Bucks (Chilterns)

I understand that in none of these cases were compulsory purchase powers used to acquire the sites.

Rates

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the impact of the non-domestic rates levied by local authorities on small firms as defined by the Bolton committee of inquiry in 1971; and what was the total amount raised from them in the 1987-88 financial year.

Mr. Howard: Information on non-domestic rates paid is not collected in a form which allows the identification of small firms.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has conducted an analysis of the possible effects of the introduction of a national non-domestic rate from April 1990, coupled with revaluation, on small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I expect to receive an analysis of the effects of the revaluation from the Inland Revenue once it has considered the information about rents it is currently collecting. I expect the results for small businesses to vary widely depending on their location and the nature of their business. My right hon. Friend has, of course, already announced that he intends to take powers to allow a more generous transition for small businesses.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in tabular form what estimates he has of the shares of non-domestic rates paid by large, medium and small businesses as defined by the size of their labour forces, or under the fourth EEC directive on company disclosures, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: I regret that no general estimates of this sort are available. Some information about rates paid by industry groups is available for years up to 1986.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much in money terms, real-terms and as a real-term percentage increase or decrease on 1979,

the level of spending by local authorities under non-housing revenue current expenditure has increased or decreased in each year since 1979.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

Net current expenditure on the rate fund revenue account[1]: 1979-80 to 1987-88
English local authorities

	Cash	*Year on year increase*	*Real[2]*	*Year on year increase*	*Percentage increase in real terms since 1979-90*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	
1979-80	13,000		22,794		
1980-81	15,682	2,682	23,191	397	1·7
1981-82	17,472	1,790	23,511	320	3·1
1982-83	19,051	1,579	23,932	421	5·0
1983-84	20,258	1,207	24,305	373	6·6
1984-85	21,600	1,342	24,819	514	8·9
1985-86[3]	22,300	700	24,179	−640	6·1
1986-87[3]	24,171	1,871	25,380	1,201	11·3
1987-88[3,4]	26,512	2,341	26,512	1,132	16·3

[1] Including a very small proportion (about ½ per cent. in 1987-88) of non-housing revenue account expenditure, on housing and housing benefit.
[2] Real expenditure has been derived by adjusting cash values to constant 1987-88 prices, using the GDP deflator.
[3] Excluding London Regional Transport levy (just over £200 million in 1985-86).
[4] Budget information.

Homelessness

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much in money terms, real terms and as a real term percentage increase or decrease on 1979, local authority expenditure on the provision of accommodation for the homeless has increased or decreased in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Roe: The information requested is given in the table. It is based on information supplied by authorities in England and Wales to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Because of variations in the authorities responding the figures for different years are not strictly comparable.

Net Expenditure Per 1000 Population on Hostel and Bed and Breakfast Accommodation England and Wales

	Current prices	*1986-87 percentage prices change*
	£	*£*
1979-80	282	472	
1980-81	281	396	−16
1981-82	242	310	−22
1982-83	306	366	18
1983-84	350	400	9
1984-85	415	454	14
1985-86	653	674	48
1986-87	1,697	1,697	152

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy with regard to the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation for the homeless.

Mrs. Roe: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 24 March at column *191-92*.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will produce statistical evidence for any year since 1979 to show which housing authorities over-claimed housing subsidies with a resulting over-provision in the supply estimates.

Mrs. Roe: I shall place the information in the Library.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has taken, or proposes to take, to ensure that housing authorities do not over-claim housing subsidies.

Mrs. Roe: For the financial year 1988-89, any authority overclaiming in two of the three audited years (1984-85 to 1986-87), whose advance final claim for 1987-88 is late or reveals a third overclaim will have its instalments for the remainder of 1988-89 abated. The abatement will take into account the size of the latest overclaim.

The Department is also monitoring national movements in interest rates against those used by local authorities in their claims. High interest rates will be queried and, where appropriate, advance instalments of subsidy will be abated.

Similar measures were taken in the previous three years.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the £5 million increased provision for housing action trusts, clarifying what has led him to conclude that this additional provision is needed.

Mrs. Roe: The Government consider that the size of some areas of poor quality local authority housing, and the nature and extent of their problems, require novel and radical approaches beyond the normal run of local authority housing activity. They therefore propose to set up housing action trusts to tackle these problems; and have allocated £125 million (£5 million in 1988-89, £50 million in 1989-90 and £70 million in 1990-91) for this purpose.

Forestry

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the Countryside Commission's proposal that all afforestation schemes over five hectares should require specific planning permission under Town and Country Planning legislation and for the amendment of section 22 of the Town and Country Planning Act to bring afforestation of sites over 0·25 hectares within the meaning of the term development.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans to bring forestry or afforestation within the scope of the planning system.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each London borough, for each year since 1980-81 *(a)* total housing investment programme expenditure (outturns) and *(b)* housing investment programme expenditure funded by capital receipts.

Mrs. Roe: Capital receipts, borrowing and revenue funding form a pool from which capital expenditure on each service is funded. Housing capital expenditure funded from capital receipts cannot, therefore, be separately identified.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each London borough, the present accrued total of capital receipts.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the information placed in the Library of the House of 9 March 1988 in reply to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier).

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures in the *Official Report* indicating, for each London borough, the amount gained in capital receipts from *(a)* right to buy, *(b)* other house sales and *(c)* other sales, for each year since 1980-81.

Mrs. Roe: Information on housing capital receipts in 1985-86, 1986-87 and the first three quarters of 1987-88 is given in the table: corresponding figures for earlier years are not readily available. Receipts from right-to-buy sales are not reported separately from other dwellings.

Housing capital receipts of London boroughs

£ thousands

	1985-86			*1986-87*			*1987-88 (nine months)*		
	Land[1]	*Dwellings*[2]	*Other*[3]	*Land*[1]	*Dwellings*[2]	*Other*[3]	*Land*[1]	*Dwellings*[2]	*Other*[3]
City of London	0	8,281	749	0	14,402	783	0	11,069	1,136
Barking and Dagenham	0	9,196	3,692	403	12,707	6,749	113	9,430	4,944
Barnet	940	9,577	2,615	1,961	11,957	4,151	202	10,831	2,711
Bexley	55	2,793	2,664	226	4,074	4,153	193	4,542	2,308
Brent	282	4,510	770	154	6,005	390	471	4,777	388
Bromley	497	10,481	3,784	605	12,631	6,895	101	14,595	3,883
Camden	14	1,556	1,790	0	4,138	301	90	3,854	393
Croydon	846	10,582	4,378	853	13,440	8,737	569	13,009	3,887
Ealing	692	7,023	5,226	526	10,283	7,988	114	5,210	5,993
Enfield	195	7,506	4,150	284	11,022	10,602	40	10,709	3,080
Greenwich	635	6,685	2,219	1,479	7,894	2,124	310	4,876	1,354
Hackney	113	1,690	663	0	3,107	676	0	4,280	2,290
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,264	6,022	2,444	2,291	5,469	3,032	n.a.	3,586	1,871
Haringey	92	5,774	1,897	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Harrow	0	3,864	283	0	4,986	3,145	0	5,542	2
Havering	357	3,608	6,698	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Hillingdon	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Hounslow	514	4,092	1,479	33	4,916	3,509	34	6,834	2,355
Islington	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kensington and Chelsea	541	1,850	3,384	283	4,825	6,356	2,020	2,935	4,356
Kingston upon Thames	1,277	1,971	3,167	632	2,561	3,375	271	1,470	1,559
Lambeth	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lewisham	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Merton	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Newham	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Redbridge	939	1,335	6,042	790	2,406	7,601	526	2,003	5,491
Richmond upon Thames	0	3,177	1,104	378	2,624	2,283	12	4,463	1,533
Southwark	1,950	4,699	451	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Sutton	2,056	5,274	1,846	485	5,984	3,158	153	5,491	828
Tower Hamlets	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	206	3,406	95	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Waltham Forest	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Wandsworth	537	25,406	7,189	1,300	26,352	12,089	662	27,354	8,572
Westminster	258	7,174	371	514	8,656	580	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Notes:

[1] Land and sales of assets other than dwellings.

[2] Initial receipts from sales of dwellings. (Selling price net of discount less mortgage lending.)

[3] Includes repayments of mortgages on earlier council house sales, other repayments of mortgage lending.

n.a. = not available.

Council House Sales

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest available figures for each London borough for *(a)* the average selling price of council dwellings under (i) right to buy and (ii) other sales and *(b)* the average percentage discount on the sale of council dwellings under (1) right to buy and (2) other sales.

Mrs. Roe: Information on selling prices and discounts is not available separately for right-to-buy and other sales. The figures in the table have been derived from those quarterly returns for 1987-88 so far received from the boroughs.

Sales of council dwellings, 1987-88
London boroughs

	Average selling price (net of discount) £	*Average discount* per cent
City of London	79,500	21
Barking and Dagenham	17,600	—
Barnet	20,300	51
Bexley	21,600	53
Brent	—	—
Bromley	20,200	54
Camden	30,000	41
Croydon	23,500	50
Ealing	—	—
Enfield	23,500	52
Greenwich	—	48
Hackney	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	26,000	45
Haringey	27,300	46
Harrow	24,300	50
Havering	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—
Hounslow	25,700	45
Islington	33,500	39
Kensington and Chelsea	41,400	38
Kingston upon Thames	23,300	49
Lambeth	—	—
Lewisham	—	—
Merton	20,900	53
Newham	—	—
Redbridge	20,100	54
Richmond upon Thames	24,900	51
Southwark[1]	23,900	41
Sutton	24,100	50
Tower Hamlets	—	—
Waltham Forest	—	—
Wandsworth	24,200	47
Westminster	—	—

— not available.
[1] excluding 228 sales of vacant dwellings.

King's Cross Goods Yard

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to establishing a development corporation or trust to oversee the development of King's Cross goods yard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the normal mechanism of the planning system is the proper way to resolve the future of this site. However, in view of the scale and importance of the proposals, he wishes to have an opportunity to consider whether any major application for the site should be called-in for his decision. He has therefore made a direction requiring Camden council to consult him before any planning application of over 100,000 sq ft is decided.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has met with either of the consortia proposing to develop the King's Cross goods yard.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* My right hon. Friend has not discussed the proposals with either of the consortia.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his written reply to the hon. Member for Clydesdale, 17 February, *Official Report*, column *663*, he will now publish the proposals for the protection of the environment and the quality of life of communities affected by opencast mining and other similar activities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many representations were received about the revised draft planning guidelines for opencast coal mining issued for consultation in April 1987.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Revised guidelines on planning control over opencast coal mining will be issued shortly. These will aim to help mineral planning authorities ensure that the right balance is struck between environmental considerations and economic benefits when planning applications for opencast working are considered. Sixty letters of representation were received in response to the consultation document.

Hampstead Heath

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision on the future of Hampstead heath; if he will take into account the views expressed by the Association of London Authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Any representations made by the Association of London Authorities or any other organisation or individual will be taken into account by my right hon. Friend in reaching his decision on the future of Hampstead heath. I expect the decision to be taken in good time for an orderly transfer of responsibility with effect from 1 April 1989.

Lime Dust (Cheriton)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of lime dust released into the atmosphere in the Cheriton region of Folkestone; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the circumstances which led to the problems caused by lime spraying by the Eurotunnel consortium and its subsequent effects on the residents of Cheriton, Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answers 19 and 21 April 1988]:* My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone (Mr. Howard) drew this incident to the Department's attention immediately on 6 April. Shepway district council contacted Eurotunnel, which is responsible for the work and the operation was suspended while the adverse weather conditions prevailed. This particular phase of the work was completed without a further recurrence of the problem.

Shepway district council has served a notice on Eurotunnel under the Public Health (Recurring Nuisances) Act 1961 to prevent similar incidents from occurring. In future the contractor will use lime granules, which are much less prone to wind disturbance.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the construction works being carried out by the Eurotunnel consortium works, particularly in respect of dust levels in the Cheriton area of Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) today. As required by the terms of the concession, an independent body, Maitre D'Oeuvre, has been appointed to monitor the design of the works and the detailed operation of the contract on behalf of the IGC. In addition, a joint consultative committee has been set up under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, with representatives of Government Departments, local authorities in Kent, Eurotunnel and British Rail to consider any matters of concern to Kent in relation to the Channel tunnel project.

Palace of Westminster (Toilets)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to ensure that male toilets in the Palace of Westminster are labelled as such.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* If the hon. Member has been experiencing any particular difficulties in identifying such toilets, I shall be happy to provide him with details of their location.

European Environment Year

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the achievements sponsored by Her Majesty's Government to date, in support of the European Year of the Environment; and if he will make a statement on the major initiatives known to his Department achieved by other European countries participant in the European environment year.

Mr. Moynihan *[pursuant to the reply, 16 February 1988, c. 525-26].* I am today placing in the Library and the Vote Office "Protecting Your Environment—A Guide"—the general guide to environmental protection.

We are making this guide widely available to environment groups, schools and members of the public.

Playgrounds

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions are given to local authorities about the design of playgrounds to ensure that children are properly protected from injury; and if he will be making proposals to ensure that adequate safeguards are available.

Mr. Moynihan: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes a general duty on local authorities to take resonable measures to ensure the safety of all non-domestic premises, including playgrounds, which are under their control. Duties under this Act are enforceable by the Health and Safety Executive to whom all serious injuries occurring in playgrounds must be reported. The Department issued guidance to local authorities on safety in children's playgrounds in 1978. This guidance was consolidated in British Standard 5696 and a new British standard on playground safety is currently being drawn up. In addition, the National Playing Fields Association provides an independent advice service on playground safety for local authorities and other playground operators.

DEFENCE

Skyguard Radar

17. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the trials of Skyguard radar equipment to monitor low-flying military aircraft movements.

Mr. Freeman: Field trials of the Skyguard radar system as an aid for monitoring low-flying military aircraft movements were carried out in July 1987, during Exercise OSEX 14, and March 1988, during Exercise Mallet Blow 88/1. Analysis of the results is still continuing.

AWRE Aldermaston

18. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to improve the security arrangements at AWRE Aldermaston.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. Improvements are planned to the boundary fence.

Service Personnel (House Purchase)

19. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what incentives his Department offers to service men to purchase their own homes.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence is very much aware of the desirability of encouraging service men to purchase their own homes, subject to the Services' operational needs. Details of the current arrangements are given in the pamphlet "Housing: a Guide to Servicemen and Servicewomen", a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

Chemical Weapons

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to discuss chemical weapons with the other Defence Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with his NATO colleagues to discuss a wide range of defence and security issues.

39. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the Alliance's chemical warfare capability.

64. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the Alliance's chemical warfare capacity.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions with his NATO colleagues concerning our common objective of the achievement of a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on chemical weapons. There are no chemical weapons declared to NATO.

A90 Building

21. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest assessment of the degree of slippage in the programme for the A90 building at AWRE Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest assessment of the degree of slippage in the programme for the A90 building at AWRE Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: As the Comptroller and Auditor General's report published last June stated, there has been slippage in the A90 building programme at AWRE Aldermaston and our assessment is that this building will now come into full operation in early 1992.

Trident

22. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on the Trident programme for every year since its inception.

Mr. Sainsbury: The expenditure each year since beginning of the United Kingdom Trident programme is as follows:

Financial Year	*Current (outturn) prices £ million*
1980-81	3
1981-82	31
1982-83	71
1983-84	95
1984-85	165
1985-86	268
1986-87	377
[1]1987-88	550

[1] The figure for 1987-88 is, at this stage, a forecast.

35. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the increase in the cost of the pressurised water reactor for the Trident submarine; and what are the implications for the total cost of the Trident project.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden).

55. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the latest estimate of the cost of Trident in relation to the original estimate.

Mr. Younger: One representation, in the form of a letter from a member of the public, has been received since I announced the revised Trident estimate in January this year.

Cruise Missiles

23. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Ministers about the possible deployment of further sea-launched cruise missiles.

52. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with other NATO Ministers about the possible deployment of further sea-launched cruise missiles.

53. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with his European North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts about the modernisation of battlefield nuclear weapons in central Europe.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 23 February 1988 at column *165*.

Defence Commitments

24. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next anticipates a major review of Britain's defence commitments.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We have no plans for any review of our defence commitments beyond the annual appraisal made in connection with the public expenditure survey.

Nuclear Submarines

25. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to announce his Department's plans for (i) decommission and (ii) disposal of obsolete nuclear submarines.

30. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to announce his Department's plans for (i) decommission and (ii) disposal of obsolete nuclear submarines.

71. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to announce his Department's plans for *(a)* decommissioning and *(b)* disposal of obsolete nuclear submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is intended that all Royal Navy nuclear submarines will be defuelled at the end of their operational lives in the same way as Dreadnought has been. No decision has yet been taken on the method of disposal for defuelled nuclear submarines.

West Germany (Low Flying)

26. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of low flights over the Federal Republic of Germany is accounted for by the Royal Air Force.

29. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of low flights over the Federal Republic of Germany is accounted for by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: During 1987 the RAF flew approximately 16,000 low-level sorties over the Federal Republic of Germany. Other low-flying activity in the Federal Republic is a matter for their Government.

Long-range Missiles

27. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with progress on the Trigat programme in view of recent developments in armour capability.

Mr. Younger: Yes, I am pleased to announce that I have now signed the memorandum of understanding indicating formally United Kingdom participation with France and Germany in the collaborative full development of both medium and long range Trigat weapons. Contracts with industry for this development work are currently being finalised. Trigat will be developed to meet the threat in the mid-1990s and beyond.

Cyprus

28. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to visit Cyprus.

Mr. Younger: I have no plans to do so at present. I visited the sovereign base areas in Cyprus in April last year.

Anglo-French Co-operation

31. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a further statement about Anglo-French defence co-operation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 22 March at column *114*.

72. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to hold one of his regular meetings with his French counterpart to discuss defence matters of common interest.

Mr. Younger: I last met M. Giraud at the WEU meeting on 18-19 April when a wide range of matters of mutual interest was discussed. I have no immediate plans for a further meeting.

Defence Contracts

32. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to assess the effectiveness of his Department's implementation of the recommendations contained in the report, "Learning from Experience", in relation to overspending on defence contracts.

37. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to assess the effectiveness of his Department's implementation of the recommendations contained in the report, "Learning from Experience", in relation to overspending on defence contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: The report "Learning from Experience" acknowledged the many improvements that have already been made in procurement procedures in recent years. Implementation of recommendations from the report is under way and progress will be kept under continual review.

57. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the initiative to publicise defence contract opportunities in France and the United States of America in order to encourage mutual purchases of equipment.

Mr. Sainsbury: Discussions with the French have led to the publication of a French contracts bulletin similar to that in the UK. The US Government also publish their own contract opportunities, and local US requirements are publicised from time to time in the British contracts bulletin. In addition, Anglo-French equipment conferences are held to discuss forthcoming requirements.

Listed Buildings

33. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the care and ultimate disposal of surplus listed buildings in the defence estate.

Mr. Freeman: The Property Services Agency is responsible, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, for the maintenance of the majority of historic listed buildings on the Defence Estate. It is its duty to ensure that such buildings are properly protected, even if surplus to requirements and awaiting disposal. The Ministry of Defence and Property Services Agency follow the Department of the Environment's guidelines which stipulate that disused historic buildings should continue to receive regular inspections and a normal standard of maintenance in order to keep the property fit for further use, or to maintain its disposal value. Such buildings can, however, create special problems and they may be difficult to sell. Despite this, every effort is made to keep them in a fit state and the MOD has recently established a historic military buildings committee, with expert outside representatives, to advise on ways in which such properties can best be preserved or disposed of in the most sympathetic manner.

Frigates

34. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of current contracts to build frigates; and how many jobs are involved.

38. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of current contracts to build frigates; and how many jobs are involved.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today.

Firing Ranges

36. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many small arms and rifle ranges his Department has responsibility for in the United Kingdom; and how many of these are electronic.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence is responsible for a total of 2,020 small arms and open ranges. Of these 45 are equipped with electric targets. In addition, a number of firing positions on field firing ranges are capable of accepting electric targets on a temporary basis when training requires.

United States Forces

40. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals have been made for the deployment of additional United States strike aircraft in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals have been made for the deployment of additional United States strike aircraft in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The level and composition of United States forces based in the United Kingdom is the subject of regular exchanges between the British and United States Governments at both ministerial and official levels. Details of these exchanges are classified.

Training Land

41. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the type, amount and geographical position of additional training land needed by his Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet on 22 March, *Official Report*, columns *110-11*.

Mr. Freeman: The principal need is for land for "dry" training, that is training without the use of live ammunition. It is Ministry of Defence policy to seek to acquire such land in any suitable area but preferably where this will allow us to extend existing training areas if and when adjoining land becomes available for purchase.

Environmental Protection

42. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the protection of the environment on lands owned or used by his Department.

65. **Mr. Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the protection of the environment on lands owned or used by his Department.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence regards conservation and the protection of the environment as integral parts of both the management and use of its estate. Since 1973 the Ministry has appointed a conservation officer to promote and co-ordinate conservation activity throughout the estate and most MOD establishments are covered by a conservation group which typically includes representatives of local communities, environmental bodies and conservation specialists. The Ministry works closely with the Nature Conservancy Council — particularly in relation to the 176 sites of special scientific interest on the estate—and has recently signed a joint declaration with the NCC on the approach to be adopted to conservation on defence land.

AWACS

43. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest value of offset contracts created in relation to the AWACS contract with Boeing.

Mr. Younger: The value of contracts claimed by Boeing in its first report is in the region of $140 million. This report is currently being evaluated.

Defence Resources

44. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards shifting defence resources from support areas to the front line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Substantial progress has been made in transferring resources from the support area to the front line since we came into office in 1979. The Royal Navy has pared back its support area so that some 70 per cent. of its uniformed manpower is now devoted to the front line and personnel spend more time at sea; the army is saving some 4,000 posts in the support area to facilitate enhancement of the front line, including the formation of two new front line regiments with no addition to total manpower; since 1984 the RAF has released 1,700 posts from the support area in the fields of catering, aircraft servicing and supply. Civilian manpower in the Ministry of Defence has declined by some 40 per cent. since 1979. We shall continue to improve value for money in defence spending.

Irish Defence Minister

45. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Irish Defence Minister.

Mr. Younger: I have never met the Irish Minister for Defence.

Aerosols

46. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to ban the use of aerosols within the buildings of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

73. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to ban the use of aerosols in his Department's buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are no such plans.

Defence Establishments (Visits)

47. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward promoting visits by Members of Parliament to defence establishments at home and abroad.

Mr. Freeman: I welcome the interest which has been shown by hon. and right hon. Members in visiting defence establishments. Opportunities exist for hon. and right hon. Members to undertake such visits as part of all-party parliamentary groups, whose planned visits are periodically drawn to their attention.

Hon. and right hon. Members are also encouraged to visit defence establishments within their own constituency by prior arrangement with the armed forces units concerned.

Tucano Jet Trainer

48. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made towards Controller Aircraft release of the Tucano jet trainer aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Sainsbury: An initial controller aircraft release is expected to be issued very soon.

Defence Expenditure

49. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the growth in expenditure on *(a)* conventional defence and *(b)* nuclear defence since May 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since 1978-79, in real terms about £21·5 billion more has been spent on defence (of which

about £2·5 billion has been on strategic nuclear defence) than would have been the case if expenditure had continued at the 1978-79 level. (Figures are cumulative to the end of 1987-88 and are at constant 1987-88 prices.)

Reserve Forces

50. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department proposes to take to give greater national publicity to the role of the reserve forces.

Mr. Freeman: In addition to the regular cycle of recruiting compaigns which bring the role of the reserve forces to the attention of the public, this year will see a major innovation in the form of the publicity campaign recommended by the national employer liaison committee, the funding for which was recently announced in the House. The precise details of this campaign have yet to be finalised but its central theme will be the promotion of general public awareness of the reserve forces by means of stressing the advantages of membership to both the individual and employers and by clearly setting out the vital role occupied by these volunteer forces.

70. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress made in expanding the volunteer reserves.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1979, when expansion measures were first set in hand by the Government, the combined strength of the volunteer reserves, not including the Ulster Defence regiment, has increased by about 32 per cent. to some 87,500. Since 1979 the strength of the TA has increased by some 15,900, with a further 3,200 for the Territorial Army's Home Service Force. During a similar period the combined strength of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve has risen by some 1,320, and the Royal Marines Reserve by about 520. Finally, since the decision to expand the Royal Naval Reserve in 1984 the strength of that reserve has risen by over 400.

Trust Fund

51. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the establishment of a trust fund to assist ex-members of the forces who cannot either sue for damages or receive ex-gratia payments in respect of injuries by the date on which such injuries occurred.

Mr. Freeman: A number of representations have been received from the right hon. Gentleman and others.

Royal Dockyards

54. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the progress of commercial management of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the speech I made in the Navy debate on 3 March 1988.

Franco-German Brigade

56. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the proposed new Franco-German brigade for Her Majesty's Government's defence posture, with particular reference to the United Kingdom's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

63. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the proposed new Franco-German brigade for Her Majesty's Government's defence posture, with particular reference to the United Kingdom's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The formation of a joint brigade, as announced at the Franco-German summit on 22 January, has no foreseeable implications for United Kingdom defence policy or our contribution to NATO.

Service Hospitals (NHS Patients)

58. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps his Department has taken to ensure that the maximum possible number of civilian National Health Service patients are admitted to service hospitals.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend, is, I am sure, referring to the national financial arrangement between the MOD and DHSS which I announced in my answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) on 30 March 1988 at column *465*. The Ministry of Defence will continue to treat NHS patients up to a baseline, which broadly equates to the defence training requirement, as a charge to the defence votes. Any spare capacity above that baseline will be offered to health authorities, on a marginal cost basis, to relieve their waiting lists and maximise the number of NHS patients treated in service hospitals. The MOD and DHSS are actively developing a plan of implementation to ensure that the health authorities and general practitioners are aware of what facilities the service hospitals have to offer. Progress in implementing these new arrangements at local level will be monitored by both Departments.

Warsaw Pact Defence Posture

59. **Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account recent and proposed NATO military exercises have taken of changes in Warsaw pact defence posture.

61. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account recent and proposed NATO military exercises have taken of changes in Warsaw pact defence posture.

Mr. Ian Stewart: NATO military exercises are planned with due regard to the currently perceived threat. Details of the scenarios are, however, classified.

Lance Missile

60. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying a follow-on to the Lance missile under the Montebello decision.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying a follow-on to the Lance missile under the Montebello decision.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo).

Montebello Agreement

Mr. Terry Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying new nuclear artillery shells under the Montebello decision.

Mr. Younger: The agreement at Montebello in 1983 did not include specific decisions on such matters. Detailed proposals for implementing the Montebello agreement were submitted to Ministers by SACEUR in 1985 and continue to be pursued with the individual nations concerned. The time scale for the introduction of new artillery rounds will vary in practice from country to country. The United States has, I understand, already deployed some improved artillery shells, designated W79, with its forces in the Federal Republic of Germany but no decisions on modernisation as it affects British forces have yet been taken.

62. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying new nuclear artillery shells under the Montebello decision.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis).

SDI Programme

66. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the strategic defence initiative programme.

74. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the strategic defence initiative programme.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: None recently, but there have been several ministerial and senior official contacts with the United States Department of Defence in recent months on various aspects of the SDI programme.

NATO

67. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Younger: I last met Lord Carrington at the meeting of the defence planning committee in December 1987, when a wide range of issues of mutual interest was discussed.

Disarmament (Stockholm Conference)

68. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the working of the procedures agreed at the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Yes. The provisions of the Stockholm agreement for notification and observation of exercises have in general worked well. There were eight observable Warsaw Pact exercises in 1987 and there have been two to date in 1988; nine NATO exercises in 1987, of which two were United Kingdom exercises, and one so far this year; and Finland has just become the first neutral and non-aligned country to host observers. The United Kingdom sent observers to all the relevant exercises.

The inspection procedures, which are designed to clarify any doubts about compliance with the provisions of the agreement and are a significant way of achieving greater confidence on all sides, have also been successfully implemented. Inspections have been carried out by the USSR on three NATO exercises; by the GDR on one NATO exercise; by the United States of America on three Warsaw Pact exercises;, and by the United Kingdom on two Warsaw Pact exercises. No evidence of non-compliance with the Stockholm agreement has been found.

Defence Expenditure

69. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the proportion of quantifiable defence spending in Wales.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Defence expenditure is not accounted for on a regional basis. However, so far as procurement expenditure is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 18 April at column *334*.

Departmental Facilities (Relocation)

75. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy on planning the relocation of Ministry of Defence facilities with regard to local levels of unemployment.

Mr. Sainsbury: In considering proposals for relocation of defence work unemployment levels are among the factors taken into account and, of course, any move would have to be justifiable in both operational and economic terms.

Deep Space Tracking Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which unit of the United States Air Force the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell will be assigned; what is the estimated cost for the construction of this facility; what is the source of funding for this construction; what is the proposed date of commencement of construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The deep space satellite tracking facility which the USAF plan to construct at RAF Feltwell will be under the command of USAF Space Command. It is estimated that the construction of this facility will cost about US$ 17 million and this will be funded by the USAF. Subject to planning approvals it is hoped to begin construction work in the summer of this year.

Air-to-Surface Missiles

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the time scale for deploying new tactical air-to-surface missiles under the Montebello decision.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo).

Mr. J. L. Imrie

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any financial assistance or advice has been given by his Department to Mr. J. L. Imrie, in respect of recent instructions given by Mr. Imrie to Kingsley Napley Solicitors.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. Mr. Imrie's legal costs are being met by those who made allegations against him without the protection of parliamentary privilege.

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average duration of a fast jet low-level sortie over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The average duration of a fast jet low-level sortie over the United Kingdom is approximately 42 minutes.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any restrictions have been placed on the export of protection and decontamination equipment for use in response to chemical and biological weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: All protection and decontamination equipment for use in response to chemical and biological weapons is subject to export licence under group 1 of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987. Each of these exports is carefully considered on a case by case basis.

Statement on the Defence Estimates

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988 will be published.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 25 April.

Japanese Prisoners of War

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from bodies representing prisoners of war in Japan during the second world war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None, although we have recently received approaches on behalf of ex-prisoners of war held elsewhere in the far east.

Professors and Lecturers (Pay and Expenses)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the rates of pay and expenses paid by the Army for lectures and other short courses of instruction by visiting professors and lecturers.

Mr. Freeman: The following rates of pay, effective from 1 March 1988, are paid by MOD to visiting civilian lecturers. The rates are set centrally by Her Majesty's Treasury and apply to all Government Departments.

	Part day session £	*Full day session* £
a. For academic lecturers		
Professor	80-162	160-216
Senior lecturer	63-117	125-155
Lecturer	36-100	71-133
b. Status equivalent to:		
Professor	85-208	167-271
Senior lecturer	71-144	157-198
Lecturer	37-119	74-157

Although minor incidental expenses are covered in the fee, more substantial expenses that are unavoidably incurred, notably travel or subsistence costs, may be reimbursed in addition to the fee.

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future division of defence costs between the Hong Kong and United Kingdom Governments.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Discussions are continuing between the British and Hong Kong Governments on the details of arrangements for sharing future defence costs in Hong Kong.

Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the Horseshoe barracks at Shoeburyness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 18 April on this matter, and I shall be meeting him shortly to discuss future plans for the site.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 April 1988

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Botswana

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approaches he has made to, or received from, the Botswana Government in respect of the raid by South African security forces into Botswana on 28 March.

Mrs. Chalker: Following the raid, the Botswana high commissioner in London called on me.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government following the raid by South African security forces into Botswana on 28 March.

Mrs. Chalker: We issued a statement on 28 March condemning the raid. I asked the South African ambassador to call on 29 March and delivered our very strong protest. On 31 March the German ambassador in Cape Town gave a similar message to the South African Government on behalf of the 12 member states of the European Community.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy on the maintenance of stability in southern Africa of South Africa's policy towards Botswana.

Mrs. Chalker: We have condemned South Africa's use of force in its relations with Botswana and its other neighbours. We shall continue to urge the South Africans to exercise restraint and to co-operate peacefully with their neighbours.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any representations to, or received representations from, the African National Congress with regard to the African National Congress's use of Botswana as a route into South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: No. But we have made clear on many occasions our opposition to cross-border incursions from whatever quarter.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the African National Congress use of Botswana as a route into South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have repeatedly condemned cross-border incursions in either direction. Our opposition to the use of violence by the African National Congress is well known to it, as well as to others.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy towards the maintenance of stability in southern Africa of the African National Congress's use of Botswana as a route into South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Cross-border incursions from whatever quarter threaten stability in the region.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he proposes to take to strengthen the United Kingdom's relationship with Botswana.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom already enjoys a close and cordial relationship with Botswana. We consult regularly about the situation in the region.

Disarmament

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during the recent meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Ministers and Heads of State, on 2 to 3 March, any consideration was given to the issues planned for discussion at the United Nations special session on disarmament, to be held in New York from 31 May to 25 June in terms of their relevance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's collective security strategy and agreed disarmament goals.

Mr. Mellor: The UNSSD was not specifically discussed at the meeting of NATO Heads of Government in March, but the Alliance keeps its security and arms control objectives under constant consideration, and allies have discussed their approach to UNSSD at official level within NATO.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 25 April.

Mrs. Chalker: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Luxembourg on 25 and 26 April. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was present on 25 April. I attended on 26 April.

The Council further reviewed the implementation of the conclusions of the European Council in Brussels in February.

Possible dates for the 1989 European Parliament elections were discussed, and the question was remitted for further consideration at the May Foreign Affairs Council.

The Council discussed progress in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, and examined prospects for the negotiations during 1988. The Council also reviewed, and reached conclusions on, relations between the Community and Japan; a copy of the conclusions is being placed in the Library of the House.

Commission proposals on guidelines for the EC's programme of aid to Asia and Latin America were discussed, and the presidency declared them adopted. The Council also met a European Parliament delegation to discuss the extension of the food aid framework regulation, which expires at the end of June: the presidency will pursue the matter further with the Parliament, and will report back to a future Council.

Though over dinner there was a discussion of political issues with Turkish Ministers, the planned Association

Council with Turkey did not, to Her Majesty's Government's great regret, take place. We attach importance to building up the Community's relationship with Turkey on the basis of the association agreement: and hope that this temporary set back will soon be overcome.

In the framework of European political co-operation, my right hon. and learned Friend raised the Kuwaiti Airlines hijacking and its aftermath, and put forward proposals for action to tighten international protection against hijacking. It was agreed that an expert group should meet soon to consider these proposals and other aspects of the hijacking.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Care

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether, in the arrangements for disclosure of information about those seeking to work with children, any restriction will be placed on the type of information that the police will be allowed to pass on to employers about those seeking to work with children other than past convictions, cautions and bindovers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether, in relation to the arrangements for the disclosure of information about those seeking to work with children, it will be permissible for the police to pass on to employers information concerning unproved allegations about those seeking to work with children which they consider relevant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the arrangements for the disclosure of information from police records to local authorities and other bodies, the police may disclose any relevant information which might give cause for concern about a candidate's suitability to work with children. Where this information does not agree with that disclosed by the candidate, the employing organisation must take the matter up with the individual before reaching a decision on whether to appoint the person to the post in question.

Gaming

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received as to the rules and money limits for amusement with prizes in public houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: None recently. The maximum amounts of the prizes which may be paid out for winning on amusement-with-prizes machines, in public houses as elsewhere, were increased on 1 January 1987. We have no current plan for any further change in the maxima, or for any amendment of the provision of the Gaming Act 1968 that premises licensed for the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises in which such machines are installed require a permit from the licensing Justices.

Remand Centres and Open Prisons

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether applications are to be invited for the contracting of management of private urban remand centres and open prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 15 April at column *258* about the fourth report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs on contract provision of prisons.

New Prison (March)

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he anticipates the new prison at March, Cambridgeshire, will be completed; what will be its final cost; what will be the number and type of inmates it will take; what will be the number of full-time prison warder staff, and the number of ancillary staff required; what will be the estimated total wage bill for the prison for all employees; and what is the starting date for recruitment of staff.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The new category B prison at March — to be known as Her Majesty's prison, Whitemoor — is expected to open in mid-1991 at a forecast capital cost of £34·9 million at current prices. The prison is designed for 522 inmates. It is estimated that 225 prison officer class and 70 locally recruited ancillary staff will be required to man the establishment at a total estimated annual salary cost of about £5 million at projected 1991 prices. The prison will be manned by serving and newly appointed officers, who will start to be posted in about the six-months period before the arrival of the first inmates; account has already been taken in forward plans of the need for the additional staff.

Firearms

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many cases of criminal or other misuse of semi-automatic rifles have been reported since the Hungerford tragedy in August 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available centrally. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 30 November 1987 at column *392*. It is planned to publish in June 1988 the summary statistics for 1987 of offences recorded by the police in which firearms were used.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking the introduction of a scheme to compensate owners of buy-in weapons that would become unsaleable by virtue of the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. John Patten: A few representations have raised the question of compensation. Decisions have not yet been reached on which weapons it will become an offence to manufacture, sell and import; simple possession will not become an offence.

Petrol Stations (Alcohol Sales)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those petrol

stations which are also licensed for the retail sale of alcoholic drinks are located in *(a)* urban areas and *(b)* rural areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department has not had cause recently to seek detailed information about the location of licensed garages. Such information as is available relates to the number of garages — petrol stations with off-licences as at 30 June 1986 by petty sessional division. This is given in the table:

Petty Sessional Divisions	*Number of garages and petrol stations licensed*
ENGLAND	
Berkshire	
West Berkshire	1
Maidenhead	1
Windsor	1
Total	3
Cheshire	
Crewe and Nantwich	1
Total	1
Cornwall	
Bodmin	8
East Pennith	1
Liskerrett	1
Penryn	1
Penwith	3
Pydar	7
South Powder	1
Truro and West Powder	1
Total	23
Cumbria	
Kendal	1
Maryport	2
Total	3
Derbyshire	
Chesterfield	5
Derby and South Derbyshire	1
Ilkeston	1
Total	7
Devon	
Barnstaple	8
Bideford and Great Torrington	7
Honiton	1
Kingsbridge	2
South Molton	4
Total	22
Dorset	
Shaftesbury	1
Total	1
Durham	
Darlington	1
Total	1
East Sussex	
Hastings	3
Battle and Rye	1
Bexhill	1
Crowborough	1
Hailsham	1
Total	7
Essex	
Colchester	3
Total	3
Gloucestershire	
Gloucester	2
Cheltenham	1
North Cotswold	1
Total	4
Hampshire	
Southampton	1
Basingstoke	1
Total	2
Hereford and Worcester	
Pershore	1
Ross	1
Total	2
Hertfordshire	
Dacorum	5
Total	5
Humberside	
Epworth and Goole	1
Holme Beacon	1
Total	2
Kent	
Ashford and Tenterden	1
Maidstone	2
Total	3
Lancashire	
Burnley	1
Chorley	1
Wyre	1
Total	3
Leicestershire	
Market Harborough	1
Rutland	1
Total	2
Lincolnshire	
East Elloe	1
Spilsby and Skegness	2
West Elloe	1
Total	4
Merseyside	
South Sefton	1
Total	1
Norfolk	
Cromer	2

Petty Sessional Divisions	Number of garages and petrol stations licensed
Downham Market	1
Fakenham	2
Great Yarmouth	2
Hunstanton	2
Kings Lynn	3
Total	12
Northumberland	
Hexham	1
Wansbeck	1
Total	2
North Yorkshire	
Claro	3
Ryedale	1
Staincliffe	2
Total	6
Oxfordshire	
Oxford City	2
Moreton and Wallingford	1
North Oxfordshire and Chipping Norton	1
Total	4
Shropshire	
Ludlow	2
Oswestry	1
Shrewsbury	2
Total	5
Somerset	
Ilminster	1
Sedgemoor	1
Total	2
South Yorkshire	
Rotherham	1
Total	1
Suffolk	
Bury St. Edmunds	1
Total	1
Surrey	
Farnham	2
Staines and Sunbury	2
Total	4
Tyne and Wear	
Newcastle Upon Tyne	2
Total	2
Warwickshire	
Kineton	1
Warwick	1
Total	2
West Midlands	
Stourbridge	1
Total	1
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	2
Wakefield	2
Total	4
Wiltshire	
Bradford on Avon	1
Trowbridge	1
Whorwellsdown	1
Total	3
Total England	148
WALES	
Clwyd	
Colwyn	3
Dyffryn Clwyd	1
Total	4
Dyfed	
Amman Valley	3
Carmarthen	1
Cemaes	1
Dewsland and Haverford West	5
Fishguard	2
Gogledd Ceredigon	3
Llanelli	2
Milford Haven	1
Narbeth	3
Newcastle Emlyn	1
Pembroke	4
Pencader	1
Tenby	3
Whitland	2
Total	32
Gwent	
Bedwelty	1
Newport	1
Total	2
Total Wales	38
Total England and Wales	186

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has concerning the percentage of total profit generated on average by the retail sales of alcoholic drinks by those petrol stations which are also licensed for such sales;

(2) whether he has any information concerning the percentage of customers using the shops at those petrol stations licensed for the retail sale of alcohol who also buy petrol.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such information.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the provision in the Licensing Bill which would remove the licence for the retail sale of alcohol from petrol stations in rural areas which hold such licences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the clause relating to garages was added to the Licensing Bill, seven letters have been received of which all but one have opposed the amendment.

Weapons

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give the number and location of publicly owned collections of edged, pointed, concussive and other weapons;

(2) what studies his Department has conducted into the effect of provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]* regarding edged, pointed, concussive and other weapons on auction houses auctioning weapons which are antique or collectors' items;

(3) if his Department had made any estimate of the number of registered traders dealing in edged, pointed, concussive and other weapons which are either antique or regarded as works of artistic or technical merit.

Mr. John Patten: Our consultations with outside interests on a first draft list of weapons which it will become an offence under the Criminal Justice Bill to manufacture, sell and import have prompted helpful responses from museums, auctioneers, dealers and others on the possible consequences of the proposals for them. These will assist us in reaching decisions on the final composition of the list.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report and recommendations of the advisory committee considering whether anabolic steroids should be made controlled drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs will consider this question when it meets on 12 May. We expect to receive its recommendations shortly thereafter.

PRIME MINISTER

Sterling

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to seek to improve co-ordination between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other interested Ministers in relation to Government policy on the level of sterling; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans for change.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the allocation of ministerial responsibility for the management of the sterling exchange rate.

The Prime Minister: Economic policy is that of the Government. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is the lead Minister.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

County Courts

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list in the *Official Report* the general public statutes and law reports made available to county court judges.

The Attorney-General: On appointment, all circuit judges are invited to select one of the following to be provided for their personal use: "All England Law Reports", "Weekly Law Reports", "Criminal Appeal Reports", "Family Law Reports". Copies of public general Acts are supplied to judges on request.

"Halsbury's Laws of England" and "Halsbury's Statutes" are available to principal county courts, together with the "All England Law Reports", the "Weekly Law Reports" and the "Law Reports". Either the "All England Law Reports" or the "Weekly Law Reports" are available to smaller county courts provided that sittings are sufficiently frequent.

ENVIRONMENT

Canary Wharf

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many buildings Canary wharf will consist of; and how many square feet of space each will have;

(2) what are the heights proposed for the major buildings envisaged at Canary wharf.

Mr. Trippier: There will be about 26 buildings of varying sizes totalling 12·2 million sq ft. The main tower will be about 800 ft high and the approved height of the other two towers is up to 690 ft.

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of the new jobs in docklands has gone to residents in the three docklands boroughs since 1981;

(2) what percentage of employment in docklands is in firms which were in existence before 1981.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of employment in docklands is female.

Mr. Trippier: About 32 per cent.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs there are in the offices of the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: About 281 — including permanent officers, fixed-term contract staff and consultancy and agency appointees.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the houses built on land taken by the London Docklands development corporation from borough councils or the Greater London council is public housing for rent.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

St. Katharine's Dock

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs there are at St. Katharine's Dock.

Mr. Trippier: About 2,600.

Water Byelaws

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the date for the implementation of the proposals first published in March 1983, under the title "Report of the Standing Technical Committee on Water Regulations on its proposals for a New Model Water Byelaws", subsequently confirmed as the model in June 1986.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall make an announcement as soon as I have given full consideration to representations received following public advertisement last year of the new byelaws made by water undertakers.

Thorpe Hall, Peterborough

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total cost to date of building the dry stone wall around Thorpe hall in Peterborough; and what is his estimate of the final total cost of the project.

Mr. Moynihan: The building of the dry stone wall around Thorpe hall, Peterborough is funded by the city council as part of its community programme, with the Manpower Services Commission. No grant aid for the wall has been given by English Heritage or by the Department. Inquiries on the cost of the project should therefore be made to Peterborough city council.

Wychwood Forest

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the order made by Oxfordshire county council to create a public footpath through Wychwood forest; when he expects a public inquiry to be held to consider the objections; and when he expects the decision on the order to be issued.

Mr. Moynihan: The Secretary of State for the Environment received the order on 2 June 1987. Subject to confirmation by Oxfordshire county council the inquiry will be held on 19 July. A decision will then be issued as soon as possible.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals his Department has for advertising in connection with the introduction of the community charge; and what will be the estimated cost of such advertising.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has as yet made no decisions on the public's need for information in relation to new rights and duties when the Local Government Finance Bill receives Royal Assent.

Supply Estimates (Hostels)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will define the term hostel as used in class IX, vote 1, A2.1(b) of the Supply Estimates.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* The term "Hostels" as used in connection with expenditure under class IX, vote 1, A2.1(b) is defined in section 106(i) of the Housing Associations Act 1985. Grant is paid under section 55 of that Act to hostels managed by housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation.

Homeless Housing Units

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many councils are the subject of special investigation into possible overspending by homeless housing units; and what proposals he has for preventing overspending by those providing bed and breakfast accommodation for local authorities.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Such investigations are the responsibility of local auditors and the Audit Commission.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Botswana

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he has taken, or proposes to take, to assist the Botswana Government to strengthen their national economy and decrease their dependence on the South African economy.

Mr. Chris Patten: All our bilateral aid to Botswana aims to strengthen the national economy. In addition we support the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference, of which Botswana is a member.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list United Kingdom contributions to Botswana through national, Commonwealth and European Community action in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: United Kingdom bilateral aid and the estimated British share of Commonwealth and European Community aid to Botswana since 1983 have been as follows:

£'000s

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom bilateral aid (1)	13,289	15,975	8,775	12,805
Estimated United Kingdom share of European Community aid	330	1,180	500	1,120
Estimated United Kingdom share of Commonwealth aid (2)	108	83	113	147

Figures for 1987 are not yet available.
(1) These figures include expenditure by the Commonwealth Development Corporation of: 3,332 6,570 2,700 6,027
(2) Figures cover the period July-June.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current development projects in Botswana for which United Kingdom national, Commonwealth or European assistance is given; what is the value of that assistance; and if he will specify the means or agencies through which assistance is given.

Mr. Chris Patten: The British bilateral aid programme to Botswana is currently funding with grants a range of technical co-operation activities including the provision of expert personnel, training for Botswana in the United

Kingdom and consultancies. We expect to spend about £5·5 million in 1988-89. This is a Government-to-Government programme.

The Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation is currently funding with grants estimated at £490,000 a number of projects in Botswana involving the provision of experts.

Projects in Botswana currently being financed by the European Community from the fifth and sixth European development funds as part of the Lomé conventions are as follows:

	Total cost of project (£ million)
Grant Funding	
Sheep and goat development (phase 2)	1·12
Services to livestock owners (phase 2)	1·80
Francistown rural training centre	0·87
Wildlife, tourism and environment	1·47
Airborne geophysical survey	1·38
Trade promotion	0·77
Conservation Kalahari ecosystem	1·40
Manpower development programme	3·08
Kasane airport	4·19
Special loan funding	
National development bank	0·56
Services to livestock owners	1·08
Pacapye water supply	1·31
European Investment Bank Risk Capital	*Risk capital*
Francistown abattoir	1·40
Botswana Development Corporation	2·10

The United Kingdom share of the EDF grants, special loans and risk capital projects totalling £22·52 million is £3·7 million.

International Children's Emergency Fund

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing per capita contributions to United Nations international children's emergency fund, for the latest year for which figures are available, for each member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in ranked order.

Mr. Chris Patten: Preliminary 1987 contributions per capita (including both general fund and special appeals) are as follows:

Rank	*Donor*	*$/head*
1	Sweden	9·41
2	Norway	9·39
3	Finland	4·64
4	Switzerland	2·63
5	Denmark	2·26
6	Canada	1·31
7	Netherlands	1·15
8	Italy	1·12
9	New Zealand	0·39
10	United Kingdom	0·34
11	Australia	0·26
12	United States of America	0·25
13	Germany	0·20
14	Austria	0·17
15	Belgium	0·17
16	Japan	0·16
17	Luxembourg	0·14
18	Ireland	0·13
19	France	0·11
20	Iceland	0·09
21	Spain	0·02
22	Greece	0·02
23	Portugal	Negligible
24	Turkey	Negligible

Note: Population figures for 1986 have been used as 1987 figures are not yet available.

International Organisations (Government Contributions)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing in constant 1987 pounds sterling contributions by Her Majesty's Government for each year since 1974 to the United Nations international children's emergency fund the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	UNICEF £ million[1]	*UNESCO £ million*[1]	*WHO £ million*[1]
1974	5·0	na	[2] 9·6
1975	10·7	[2]6·0	[2] 9·1
1976	6·0	[2]6·6	[2]12·6
1977	7·6	[2]6·7	[2]12·2
1978	13·5	5·1	[2]13·7
1979	[3]13·3	5·4	11·0
1980	7·5	4·3	12·4
1981	10·0	5·9	7·9
1982	7·5	6·3	8·8
1983	7·3	6·9	10·2
1984	6·9	0·4	11·4
1985	9·1	6·8	12·5
1986	8·7	—	12·0
1987[4]	13·6	—	10·9

[1] Constant (1987) prices.
[2] Partly estimated.
[3] Special increase to mark international Year of the Child.
[4] Figures for 1987 are provisional.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government expect to achieve the United Nations' target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product for overseas aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: Like previous Administrations, the Government have not set a date for achieving the 0·7 per cent. target. Progress towards the target depends on developments in the economy and other claims on resources. We have a substantial aid programme and one that is now growing in real terms.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the percentage increase in teachers' pay for each year since 1974.

Mrs. Rumbold: The pay increases received by teachers in England and Wales from 1 April 1974 to 1 April 1986 are listed in chapter 3 of the Government's consultative document, "Teachers' Pay and Conditions" Cmnd. 238, copies of which are in the Library. In 1987 teachers in

England and Wales received a pay increase of 16·4 per cent. in two equal instalments from 1 January and 1 October 1987.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Furs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will state the principal countries of origin of the lynx furs offered for sale annually in the United Kingdom as finished garments; and if he will estimate for each country the number of garments involved;

(2) if he will state the principal countries of origin of the red fox furs offered for sale annually in the United Kingdom as finished garments; and if he will estimate for each country the number of garments involved.

Mr. Atkins: The items referred to are not identified separately in the *Overseas Trade Statistics*.

Hairdressing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what other European Community members have statutory controls on the hairdressing industry; and what are the natures of such controls in each country.

Mr. Atkins: I am making inquiries and will write to the hon. Member when the information is available.

Accounts (Prosecutions)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of prosecutions for failure to file *(a)* accounts and *(b)* annual returns have been successful in each year since 1978.

Mr. Maude: Following is the information.

	Prosecutions initiated		*Number not proceeded with*[1]		*Number heard at court*		*Convictions*		*Convictions as a percentage of numbers heard at court*	
	Accounts	*Annual returns*	*Accounts*	*Annual returns*	*Accounts*	*Annual returns*	*Accounts*	*Annual returns*	*Accounts*	*Annual returns*
1978	818	2,245	187	475	392	1,254	392	1,251	100·0	99·8
1979	3,103	1,933	951	610	1,381	826	1,375	820	99·6	99·3
1980	2,290	1,430	506	378	1,742	1,036	1,720	1,028	98·7	99·2
1981	1,952	1,270	381	247	1,470	957	1,433	948	97·5	99·1
1982	1,886	1,442	424	321	1,478	1,126	1,472	1,123	99·6	99·7
1983	1,920	1,494	528	460	1,203	861	1,188	848	98·8	98·5
1984	2,928	2,190	1,006	827	1,536	1,091	1,530	1,087	99·6	99·6
1985	4,409	3,109	1,549	1,049	2,462	1,736	2,449	1,732	99·5	99·8
1986	5,160	3,359	2,074	1,540	2,672	1,728	2,654	1,715	99·3	99·2
1986-87	5,454	3,503	2,141	1,518	2,749	1,672	2,728	1,661	99·2	99·3
1987-88	5,339	2,868	2,017	1,233	2,932	1,462	2,908	1,448	99·2	99·0

[1] Includes cases where summonses could not be served or were withdrawn but excludes those adjourned "sine die" which are not shown in the table.

Safety of Goods

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultative procedures are followed when taking action under section 11(5) of the Consumer Protection Act 1987; and if he will publish any guidelines on how businesses likely to be affected by proposed regulations are consulted.

Mr. Butcher: About 80 organisations are consulted on safety regulations covering consumer products. These include chambers of commerce, the associations representing wholesalers, retailers, importers, manufacturers, independent businesses and mail order houses as well as local authorities, enforcement bodies, consumer groups, the British Standards Institution and the Health and Safety Commission. Copies of draft regulations are deposited in the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries. To this general list are added trade associations and other organisations representing those directly concerned with the particular regulations. I am confident that all reasonable steps are taken to consult all those with an interest and I do not consider it necessary to issue any further guidelines.

Voluntary Restraint Agreements

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps are taken by his Department to monitor the burden on business of voluntary agreements.

Mr. Alan Clark: Voluntary restraint arrangements do not impose any special administrative or legal burdens on United Kingdom business but have an economic impact. In looking at the net effect of such arrangements on the United Kingdom economy as a whole, my Department examines the effect on the industry concerned as well as that on industrial and other users.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Darlington on 30 March, *Official Report*, column *478*, he will list the nature of each voluntary restraint agreement to which he refers.

Mr. Alan Clark: As indicated in my written answer of 30 March, at column *478-79*, the majority of the voluntary restraint agreements are negotiated between the United Kingdom industry and its counterpart overseas. The agreements negotiated by the European Commission on steel and textiles (and those with Japan which were brought to an end in 1985) were entered into on behalf of

the Community as a whole. The Commission does negotiate restraints on footwear with certain eastern European countries on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what extent the United Kingdom has been party to discussions on inter-industry voluntary restraint agreements within the framework of the general agreement on tariffs and trade round negotiations; and what conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Community was party to the agreement reached by Ministers of the contracting parties to the general agreement on tariffs and trade (GATT) in September 1986 that all trade restrictive or distorting measures inconsistent with GATT should be phased out or brought into conformity with GATT by the date of the formal completion of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations. There have been no substantive discussions to date on the relationship to GATT of industry-to-industry voluntary restraint agreements.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will list those restraint agreements on steel applicable to the United Kingdom, giving the date of commencement and extent of each such agreement.

Mr. Alan Clark: As part of the Community's external regime on steel, the European Commission negotiates restraint arrangements on behalf of all member states of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). There are currently agreements with the following major suppliers.

Country	*Year commenced*
Austria	1978
Finland	1978
Norway	1978
Sweden	1978
Bulgaria	1979
Czechoslovakia	1978
Hungary	1978
Poland	1978
Romania	1978
Brazil	[1]1979
	[2]1985
Republic of Korea	1978
Venezuela	1987

[1] pig iron only
[2] other steel product

These agreements apply to EEC products only. They are negotiated annually, commencing 1 January.

In addition, there is an inter-industry agreement on special steels from Spain, which we understand is negotiated on an annual basis during the period of Spanish transition to full Community obligations.

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to restrain imports of flexible manufacturing systems from Japan and Taiwan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. There is an inter-industry restraint arrangements on machining centres and numerically controlled lathes from Japan.

BSC (Advertising)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has on the sums paid by the British Steel Corporation to advertising agencies since 11 June 1987;

(2) what information he has on the expenditure incurred by the British Steel Corporation on television advertising in the period from 11 June 1987 until the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: None. All recent advertising by the British Steel Corporation has been at BSC's own initiative and expense.

Intellectual Property

Mr. Jim Lester: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he intends to consult the World Intellectual Property Organisation about the general compatibility of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]* with the requirements of the Berne convention; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations there have been between his Department and the World Intellectual Property Organisation about the compatibility of clauses 115 to 119 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]* as regards the jurisdiction of the proposed Copyright Tribunal over licences to perform a literary, dramatic or musical, work in public, with the provisions of article II, as limited by the United Kingdom's 1948 Brussels declaration, and article II ter of the Berne convention (Paris Act): and if he will make a statment;

(3) what consultations there have been between his Department and the World Intellectual Property Organisation, about the compatibility of clause 65(3) of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]* with paragraph 3 of article II bis of the Berne convention (Paris Act) as regards the exemption for ephemeral recordings made by a broadcasting organisation by means of it own facilities and used for its own broadcasts; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what consultations there have been between his Department and the World Intellectual Property Organisation about the compatibility of clause 69(1) of the Copyright Designs and Patents Bill *(Lords)* under which the inclusion of certain works in a cable programme service would not be an infringement of the copyright in those works, with the provisions of article II bis of the Berne convention (Paris Act); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has not formally consulted the World Intellectual Property Organisation on the general provisions of the Bill, or on any particular clause, since the functions of the organisation do not include judging the compatibility of national legislation with the requirements of the Berne convention. We have, however, kept the organisation fully informed of the progress and contents of the Bill.

Mr. Ivan Boesky

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any information about takeovers, other than the Guinness takeover of Distillers, in which Mr. Ivan Boesky has been involved in a professional or personal capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: It is not our practice to reveal such information.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many alleged insider dealing cases are presently under investigation by his Department.

Mr. Maude: Fifteen cases of possible contraventions of the insider dealing legislation are presently being investigated, all of them by inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what additional expenditure is expected in 1988-89 in connection with the sale of shares in Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Atkins: Residual expenditure is expected in 1988-89, mainly due to a delay in the payment of stamp duty to the Inland Revenue. Parliamentary approval for this expenditure will be sought in a Supply Estimate of class V, vote 9. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2,500,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Public Purchasing

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much purchasing by Government and other public bodies is accounted for in the United Kingdom's gross domestic product; what estimates he has of the amount of public purchasing contracts by Government and other public sector bodies awarded to United Kingdom firms; and what estimates he has of comparable figures for other European Community countries.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Based on national accounts data, United Kingdom public sector final expenditure on goods and services (but excluding wages and salaries) and fixed assets in 1987 accounted for about one eighth of gross domestic product at market prices. Comparative information for European Community countries, which is on a slightly different basis and limited to general Government (that is, central and local government), is set out in the table.

United Kingdom firms account for about 98 per cent. of the value of United Kingdom Government contract advertised and awarded under European Community/GATT rules, with about 94 per cent. of goods and services supplied being of United Kingdom origin. Comparable figures are not readily available for other public bodies in the United Kingdom or public sectors in other European Community countries.

General Government final expenditure as percentage of gross domestic product

	per cent.	*Year*
United Kingdom	10·2	1984
Belgium	6·6	1984
Denmark	9·5	1984
France	7·3	1984
Germany	11·6	1984
Greece	n/a	
Ireland	11·3	1983
Italy	9·4	1984
Luxembourg	15·4	1982
Netherlands	7·8	1984
Portugal	7·5	1981
Spain	5·4	1982

Notes:

1. Gross domestic product is at market prices.
2. With the exception of Germany, for which OECD data have been used, figures are derived from the latest EUROSTAT publication, with the year to which they relate indicated.
3. Figures for certain current receipts and sales of fixed assets are netted off in the published expenditure figures.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Polyester Fabrics

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why polyester fabrics enclosing flame-retardant polyester are still approved for use by his Department.

Mrs. Currie: Only the flame retardant (FR) forms of polyester fabric or treated cotton are recommended for use as primary and secondary covers enclosing FR polyester in-fill for continental quilts used in the NHS. All supplies under national contract comply with these requirements.

Leaflets FB22

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *89*, what steps he has taken to ensure the availability of leaflet FB22 in all those local offices where claimants from the ethnic minorities affected use the services of the local office; and if he has any plans to produce the leaflet in addition in Greek and Turkish.

Mr. Portillo: Social security series FB22 is a group of six minority language leaflets giving the same general overview of benefits as the English-language leaflet FB2 "Which benefit?" There are plans to produce a new set of translations later this year in seven languages: Urdu, Hindi, Gujerati, Bengali, Punjabi, Chinese and Turkish. Translations into other languages, including Greek, are being considered.

All the FB22 series leaflets will be available from social security offices and copies will be sent out to local and national ethnic minority organisations, and to welfare and advice organisations. Posters advertising the leaflets will also be produced in minority languages. They will be displayed in social security offices and will be available to organisations that request them.

Nursing in London Study

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the "Nursing in London" study.

Mr. Newton: Copies have been sent to the Health Service and placed in the Library today.

Free School Meals

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received seeking amendment of section 77 of the Social Security Act

1986 to enable local authorities to receive directly the £2·20 included in the family credit to compensate for the loss of free school meals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Representations have been received from one local authority. Paying the £2·55 directly to local authorities would be inconsistent with the Government's policy of providing benefits to working families wherever possible in the form of cash rather than kind. There would in any case be significant practical difficulties.

Maternity Payments

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing the number of maternity payments made in 1987-88 to women in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* family income supplement.

Mr. Portillo: The number of social fund maternity payments made during the period 6 April 1987 to 8 April 1988 was as follows:

	Number
To people receiving supplementary benefit	178,509
To people receiving family income supplement	9,896

Housing Benefit

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the additional cost in the first year of operation of raising the proposed cut-off for housing benefit from £6,000 of capital to £10,000.

Mr. Portillo: Of the order of £60 million on the assumptions contained in the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 18 April 1988 at columns *341-42*.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions exist for payment of benefit to a young person, living away from home, awaiting a place on a YTS course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I assume that the hon. Member refers to under 18-year-olds who, from September, will not be entitled to income support except in prescribed circumstances. The Government intend that young people under 18 who have applied for a youth training scheme and have good reason for being away from home, or have no parental home, will be entitled to income support, subject to the normal rules, during the child benefit extension period. This is the additional period (16 weeks for summer school leavers, and 12 weeks for others) during which their parents would be entitled to claim child benefit for them if they were at home. Regulations have not yet been laid, but our intention is that those with good reason for living away from home will include young people who have recently been in local authority care, those at risk of physical or sexual abuse if they remain at home, those under the guidance of the prison or probation service or a social services department who have been advised to live away from home and those whose parent or guardian is unable to support them because, for example, he or she is in prison.

The Government have guaranteed that every young person who wants a youth training scheme place will be offered one before the end of the extension period.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, whether acceptance of a place on a YTS course leads to eligibility for income support for a young unemployed person living away from home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Government intend that someone under 18 who is receiving a youth training scheme training allowance will be able to receive income support to supplement his training allowance if it is insufficient, by income support standards, to meet his living expenses, for example because he is in accommodation on a "board and lodging" basis. We plan to lay regulations later this summer to prescribe the circumstances in which someone under 18 will have title to income support.

Retirement Age

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the retirement ages of men and women in each of the countries of the EEC.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the Department's publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (Position at 1 January 1987)", a copy of which is in the Library. Section IV contains information concerning retirement ages for men and women in each of the EC member states.

Waiting Lists

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 September 1987.

Mr. Newton: The figures for the end of September 1987 show that, on a comparable basis with previous waiting list statistics, the in-patient waiting list was 662,000. This is 4 per cent. less than the March 1987 figure of 687,000, and 3 per cent. less than the September 1986 figure of 681,900.

As a result of changes resulting from the introduction of the new Körner NHS information system from April 1987, additional information is also available, for example on the number of patients with a booked date of admission, the number of patients who have put off the date of their operation, the number of patients admitted to hospital from the list, and the number of patients awaiting treatment as day cases.

A statistical bulletin describing this information more fully has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Mrs. L. Scotson

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will urgently review the benefit entitlement of Mrs. L. Scotson of 2, Marshgreen cottages, Hartfield, East Sussex.

Mr. Scott: I wrote to the hon. Member about this case on 19 April.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many requests for funding have been

received from organisations supporting those addicted to tranquillisers; how many have been given assistance; and how many have been refused and for what reason.

Mrs. Currie: Six organisations offering support specifically to those dependent on tranquillisers have applied for central Government funding since 1984. Four of these have received grants. The two remaining applications are still under consideration.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to provide any funding for the Council for Involuntary Tranquilliser Addiction in Merseyside.

Mrs. Currie: We have already provided funding for several organisations on Merseyside experienced in the field of tranquilliser addiction including the following:

Name	*Total funding* £
Mainstream (Warrington)	81,534
Merseyside Drugs Council (St. Helens)	70,893
Merseyside Drugs Council (Wirral)	61,563

These are all supported by the local statutory authorities. Mersey region has been allocated a total of £2,177,756 under the central drugs initiative. No request for funding has been received by the Council for Involuntary Tranquilliser Addiction, which I understand is a locally based pressure group.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of his Department's offices where partitions have been strengthened in sections where the public have access over the past six months.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 18 April at column *344*.

HIV Testing

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of research undertaken on surgical glove punctures at Leicester general hospital, he will introduce routine pre-operative HIV testing for patients and regular screening for surgeons.

Mr. Newton: The health care workers sub-group of the expert advisory group on AIDS intends to review its "Guidance for Surgeons, Anaesthetists, Dentists and their Teams for Dealing with Patients Infected with HTLV III", issued in 1986, and will take into account any relevant evidence. Meanwhile, as my hon. Friend is aware, the expert advisory group's report "AIDS: HIV Infected Health Care Workers", published last month, concluded that the risk of the virus being transmitted in a health care setting is extremely low, and stressed that no case of a patient being infected by a health care worker has been reported anywhere in the world.

National Childbirth Trust

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date in 1987 an application was received from the National Childbirth Trust for a three-year grant commencing on 1 October 1987; for what amount the application was made; what previous grants have been made to this group; and when he expects a final decision on the current application to be made.

Mrs. Currie: An initial application from the National Childbirth Trust for section 64 funding for a further three years was received early in April 1987. The relevant financial information was not received until September 1987.

The request was for:

£58,000 for 1987-88
£62,000 for 1988-89
£65,000 for 1989-90
or alternatively a sum of £62,000 for each of the three years 1987-88 to 1989-90 inclusive.

Previous grants to the Trust were:—

£2,500 for 1977-78
£10,000 for 1978-79
£10,000 for 1979-80
£11,250 for 1980-81
£15,000 for 1981-82
£15,000 for 1982-83
£15,000 for 1983-84
£55,000 for 1984-85
£58,000 for 1985-86
£42,000 for 1986-87
£31,000 for 1987-88

We expect to respond shortly.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to make regulations extending the powers of the occupational pensions board to modify the rules of occupational pension schemes to enable them to reduce surplus funds in accordance with schedule 22 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend has intended making regulations under section 64(1A) of the Social Security Act 1973 to enable the Occupational Pensions Board to authorise modification of the rules of occupational pension schemes to enable them to reduce any surplus in scheme funds in any of the ways specified in schedule 22 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. The board, to which draft regulations giving effect to this proposal were referred, has received legal advice that regulations made under section 64(1A) could not work in the way intended. I have decided, therefore, to withdraw the draft regulations and to await the report of the board on the matters which I have referred to it today, before proceeding further.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will invite the occupational pensions board to consider whether further measures are needed to safeguard the interests of members of occupational pension schemes, the role of trustees of such schemes and associated issues.

Mr. Scott: I have today asked the occupational pensions board to consider and report to my right hon. Friend on the following issues:

(i) the balance to be struck between employers' legitimate interests and those of members of occupational pension schemes;
(ii) the involvement of pension schemes in company mergers and takeovers;
(iii) the extent to which decisions of the trustees of occupational pensions schemes should be unanimous and the circumstances in which one or more trustees may act on their own;
(iv) the need for independent trustees of pension

schemes;

(v) whether restrictions should be placed on investments by pension funds in companies to which they relate; and

(vi) any other measures to safeguard the rights of members.

My right hon. Friend has asked to receive the board's report before the end of the year.

Benefits

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the proportion of families with children dependent on supplementary benefit who received one or more single payments, broken down into two and one-parent families.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 April 1988]:* The latest available figures are as follows:

Percentage receiving single payments

	Per cent.
One-parent families	12·7
Two-parent families	23·7
Total: all families with children	36·4

The information relates to single payments made in the twelve months preceding the February 1986 annual statistical inquiry to claimants in receipt of benefit at the time of the inquiry. As a result, it does not record all the single payments made in the year.

Ambulances (Emergency Calls)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Avon ambulance authority met the ORCON standard for emergency calls in 1986.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* In 1986-87 the Avon ambulance authority exceeded the ORCON standards for emergency calls. This information is contained in the latest package of Health Service indicators which is in the Library.

Private Ambulances

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to involve health authorities in the standards achieved by private ambulances along the lines of the regulations applied to private nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Private ambulance companies are free to operate subject to the provision of common law and traffic legislation. We have no current plans to introduce further legislation, but the Department is keeping the matter under review. Health authorities continue to be responsible for the standards of service for patients which they may buy in.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions during 1987 a higher private tender submitted under the competitive tendering process in the National Health Service has been accepted in preference to a lower in-house tender; in which district health authorities this occurred and with which contracts; and what were the reason given for this course of action.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* This information is not available centrally since under the terms of departmental guidance evaluation of tenders is a matter for the health authority concerned. Where a district health authority decides that there are compelling reasons for not accepting the lowest tender it is expected to notify its decision to the appropriate regional health authority.

The 1987 National Audit Office reports on competitive tendering for support services in the NHS provides the best available information on practice in rejecting the lowest tender bids. Of the 29 cases which NAO examined nine involved a decision to reject the lowest tender. In two of these cases commercial contractors were rejected in favour of in-house tenders and in the other seven cases one commercial contractor was rejected in favour of another. Eight of the contracts were for domestic services and one for laundry services. The main reasons to reject the lowest tender were as follows:

	Number
a. Inadequate hours tendered for job required	4
b. Inadequate proposed staffing levels	1
c. Inadequate or incomplete tender submission	2
d. Doubts on feasibility not dispelled on interview	1
e. Small cost difference linked to wider operational, personnel and financial considerations	1
	9

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bulbs (Imports)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what estimate he has of the proportion of bulbs imported from the Netherlands and examined by plant health inspectors to ensure that they are soil-free;

(2) whether he will list the seaports and airports where Dutch bulbs have been imported in 1987; and whether sufficient plant health inspectors have been available to examine each consignment.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the last import season, which ended in February, our plant health and seed inspectors examined just under 10 per cent. of all consignments of bulbs imported from the Netherlands. They checked for plant pests and excess soil. The inspectors work to a planned pattern of import checks on representative samples of a wide range of plants, bulbs, vegetables and so on, and covered this satisfactorily; it is not considered necessary to check each consignment of imported bulbs.

The main ports of arrival for Dutch bulbs last year were Felixstowe, Dover, Harwich and Hull although small quantities may have been imported through other points of entry. Most inspections of imported bulbs are carried out at the importer's premises or nurseries.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any representations from individual customers of companies in the Netherlands about the state of bulbs they have imported from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to propose any change before 1992 in the system of inspecting bulbs imported from other EEC countries

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no basic changes in mind at present, but our overall system of import inspections is flexible and can be adapted to meet particular needs.

Bulbs (Inspection)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will institute a system of total field inspection for bulbs, to be paid for by growers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. I see no reason to introduce total inspections of all bulb fields. So far as exports are concerned, growing season inspections are already necessary for bulbs intended for European Community member states and certain other countries. Under our domestic legislation charges are made for these inspections.

Bulbs (Exports)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the countries other than the Netherlands to which the United Kingdom has exported bulbs in the last two years; and whether any country has complained that the imported bulbs were not soil-free.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Leaving aside exports to the Netherlands, the United Kingdom has exported bulbs in the last two years to the United States, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the Republic of Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and Austria. Small quantities have been sent to several other countries. None of these importing countries has complained that the bulbs were not soil-free.

Animal Feedingstuffs

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the new system of registration and control of medicated animal feedingstuff.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Two statutory instruments will shortly be laid before Parliament to implement the first part of new controls on medicated animal feedingstuffs. A central feature is a requirement that all manufacturers of medicated feedingstuffs must register with the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain or the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and agree to abide by a code of practice. Registration will take place in two stages: 1 July 1988 is the operative date for those with more sophisticated facilities, and 1 July 1989 for the remainder. Fees will be charged to cover the costs of administering and enforcing the register. Further controls on licensing and sale and supply of medicinal feed additives are being prepared. It is intended that these should also come into force on 1 July 1989.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Transfer)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants have been transferred since 1979 in the relocation of Government Departments and agencies from London and the south-east to the regions.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 31 March 1988, at columns 610-11, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold).

Government Agencies (Relocation)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what cost savings have been made by the relocation of Government agencies to the regions since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, since no records are kept centrally of cost savings from relocations by central Government agencies. However, a recent report has been submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland evaluating the dispersal of part of the Overseas Development Administration from central London to East Kilbride in 1981. This offers evidence of the significant financial and other advantages which can be obtained through relocation. I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend intends to publish this report in the near future.

Chancellor of the Exchequer (Television Interview)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place a copy of the transcript of his interview on the "This Week/Next Week" programme on 24 April in the Library.

Mr. Lawson: No; but I understand that a transcript is available from the BBC.

Finance Bill (Notes on Clauses)

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the notes on those clauses of the Finance Bill to be taken in Committee of the whole House will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Major: Yes. The appropriate notes on clauses were placed in the Vote Office earlier today.

WALES

Health Authorities (Chairmen)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the conditions of employment of chairmen of health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: There are no conditions of employment as such for chairmen of health authorities, but I am placing in the Library of the House a copy of a note of guidance which is given to them on appointment.

Council Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes to introduce to the cost-floor sale in relation to the sale of council-owned houses; and in what way he proposes to ensure that such changes do not cause an unacceptable reduction in the public sector rented housing stock in rural areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Grist: An amendment to the Housing Bill has been tabled which provides that only costs which have been incurred within eight years before the sale will be taken into account in calculating the cost floor.

This modification will enable more tenants to buy their own homes. In areas of outstanding natural beauty, national parks and designated rural areas the opportunity will remain for landlords to repurchase a property if it is resold within 10 years.

Chernobyl (Compensation)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications for review he has received from farmers in Wales claiming to have suffered losses as a result of the Chernobyl disaster but who had not been compensated under the Government's scheme; if he will give the date range when these applications were made; if each such application was considered individually; on what date a decision was taken on them; how many of these applications he has rejected; and if he will make a statement on the general pattern of the defects in the applications which led to their rejection.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 11 January 1988 the National Farmers Union in Wales presented to my Department 56 cases that it considered to have been inadequately compensated by the direct losses scheme under the Chernobyl compensation arrangements. The evidence submitted by the union did not reveal any special problems or anomalies not already covered by the existing compensation arrangements. The union also confirmed that no new principles of compensation had been identified. I wrote to the chairman of the NFU in Wales on 23 March 1988 rejecting the 56 cases.

A detailed examination of those individual cases showed that they fell into four broad categories:

(i) 10 cases where the producers concerned received compensation under the direct losses scheme in amounts varying from £191 to £3,672, but where the producers concerned alleged that they had incurred greater costs than the compensation they had received;

(ii) 25 cases where the producers received compensation under the scheme in amounts from £275 to £3,312 but where they were claiming more because they sold only a proportion of their animals in the three week qualifying period and as a result considered that not all their costs had been compensated;

(iii) 17 cases where the producers concerned received no compensation under the direct losses scheme since they sold their animals outside the qualifying period;

(iv) Four cases which fell outside the terms of the scheme.

A primary objective of the compensation arrangements was to get money to the affected producers as quickly as possible and it was agreed by the farming unions that this made it impossible to deal with all cases on an individual basis. It was similarly agreed that the inevitable consequence of this approach was that the compensation could not be matched precisely to the amount that might have been lost in every individual case. This agreement pointed firmly to the conclusion that the 10 cases in category (i) should be rejected.

The 42 cases in categories (ii) and (iii), were based upon sales outside the three-week rule of the agreed scheme and had to be rejected. The NFU accepted this principle at a meeting with me on 28 September 1987.

Finally, the remaining cases in category (iv) fell entirely outside the terms of the agreed scheme. In one case, the producer chose to keep extra animals on his holding; the second claim related to the monitoring and marking scheme and the remaining two claims were for alleged price blight on animals sold clean after derestriction. There was no basis for those claims to be considered within this review.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers in Wales have received compensation arising from losses following the Chernobyl disaster; and what has been the total amount of money paid in Wales by way of such compensation.

Mr. Peter Walker: As at 15 April 1988, a total of £3,323,948·61 has been authorised for payment covering 6,808 claims from farmers in Wales.

Bus Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many bus services have been discontinued in (i) Gwynedd, (ii) Clwyd and (iii) Powys since 26 January 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of bus routes discontinued since 26 January 1987 are:

	Number
Gwynedd	8
Clwyd	14
Powys	Nil

In the same period the numbers of new routes introduced are:

	Number
Gwynedd	20
Clwyd	15
Powys	2

These figures indicate a net increase in bus routes.

Steel Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the trade unions concerning the privatisation of the steel industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The privatisation of the British Steel Corporation and the implications for its employees are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, I believe that BSC plants in Wales are well placed to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by privatisation and I am always willing to meet the unions involved in the Welsh steel industry.

Mentally Handicapped Patients

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered (i) mentally ill and (ii) mentally handicapped patients there were in the Clwyd area health authority in 1987 and 1979; how many staff were employed with groups (i) and (ii) in 1979 and 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The following figures relate to resident patients and staff numbers in mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in Clwyd:

Resident patients[1]

	1987	*1979*
Mental illness hospitals and units	528	656
Mental handicap hospitals and units	72	79

[1] As at 5 April.

Consultants, nursing and other professional staff[1]

	1986	*1979*
Mental illness hospitals and units	511·0	460·8
Mental handicap hospitals and units	100·0	79·2

[1] Whole-time equivalents, as at 30 September.

Hygicare Ltd., Wrexham

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how long Hygicare Ltd., located in Wrexham, had to wait for outside financial appraisal for a regional development grant application from his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department does not conduct outside financial appraisals for regional development grant purposes.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the area of land approved for forestry grant aid in each of the six years to 31 March in Wales; and if he will state the area of land afforested or restocked in each of those years.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Year ended 31 March

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Area of land approved for planting or restocking (hectares)	2,002	2,175	1,811	2,466	4,580	3,470
Area of new planting or restocking grant-aided by the Forestry Commission (hectares)	1,067	1,177	1,040	1,177	988	2,204

SCOTLAND

Local Authorities (Social Security Changes)

8. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet Scottish local authority associations to discuss the implications for local authority manpower and expenditure in Scotland of the changes in the social security system; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the manpower and financial implications for local authorities as a result of the changes in housing benefit regulations.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities regularly to discuss local government finance. Our next meeting will be on 29 April.

Local Government (Employment Trends)

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about trends in employment in local government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numer of full-time equivalent staff employed by Scottish local authorities fell by 3·9 per cent. between December 1979 and December 1987. Apart from one minor fluctuation, the trend has been steadily downwards until last year when numbers showed a 1·5 per cent. increase.

Dundee

20. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last made an official visit to Dundee.

Mr. Rifkind: I last visited Dundee on 30 March when I accompanied my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Rating Reform

21. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the impact of the community charge on people on low incomes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations from Members of Parliament, other individuals and various organisations. Those on lower incomes will be protected by the rebate scheme, which will take account of ability to pay.

31. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the cost of introducing the community charge to the Borders region.

Mr. Lang: There have been no recent representations about the cost of introducing the community charge in the Borders.

37. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about progress in compiling registers for the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: Compilation of the community charges registers is a matter for community charges registration officers, who from 1 April were empowered to undertake inquiries for this purpose of responsible persons at each address, and who are required to prepare the community charges register by 1 October.

44. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the numbers seeking exemption from the payment of the poll tax as a result of the revision of forms currently being issued by the local registrars.

Mr. Lang: Exemption from liability to pay the personal community charge in Scotland arises from the provisions

of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and not from any revisions that might be made to forms issued by community charges registration officers.

45. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the cost of introducing the community charge in the Highland region.

Mr. Lang: The total additional capital allocation which I have given Highland regional council in respect of the implementation of the community charge in 1987-88 and 1988-89 is adequate to meet the council's requirements. I am considering a letter from the council about the way in which the allocations are split between these years.

Court of Session

22. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any proposals for speeding up the conduct of business in the Court of Session; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Delays in the conduct of business in the Court of Session were reduced during 1987. Recommendations aimed at securing the speedy disposal of business were made in the report of the review body on the use of judicial time in the superior courts in Scotland, chaired by Lord Maxwell and published on 18 July 1986. Most of these recommendations, which fall within the responsibility of the Lord president of the Court of Session, have been implemented. In addition the Court of Session has been engaged in reviewing many aspects of its work in order to progress it effectively.

Inward Investment

23. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the aggregate value of inward investment to Scotland since 1979; and how many jobs have resulted therefrom.

Mr. Lang: The estimated aggregate value of inward investment to Scotland from 1979 to date is £2·9 billion with the prospect of the creation or safeguarding of 64,980 jobs.

Labour Statistics

24. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of employees in employment and the total number of employees in manufacturing industry, standard industrial classification 2-4, in Scotland in June 1979 and June 1987.

Mr. Lang: The total number of employees in employment is estimated to have been 2,102,000 in June 1979 and 1,886,000 in June 1987. For manufacturing the figures are 604,000 for June 1979 and 395,000 for June 1987.

Breast Cancer Screening Unit (Ayrshire)

25. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet made arrangements for setting up a breast cancer screening unit in Ayrshire; and if he will outline arrangements made for Ayrshire women in the interim.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The introduction of a national breast cancer screening service in Scotland for all women aged between 50 and 64 will be a phased programme. The first four centres, in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee, will come into operation during the course of this year and we aim to have the remaining centres in operation by 1991. We shall consult individual health boards about the location and commissioning of the remaining centres required to provide a national screening service. The current diagnostic facilities for breast examination will continue to be available in the normal way for women in Ayrshire and elsewhere.

CBI Scotland

26. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry (Scotland) concerning the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend keeps in frequent touch with the Confederation of British Industry (Scotland) on matters concerning the Scottish economy. When addressing CBI members in Glasgow on 19 February he called attention to the significant advances made in the Scottish economy in recent years and to the favourable conditions for further growth which has been created by the Government's policies to stimulate enterprise and improve competitiveness.

Housing Benefit

27. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about the effects of the new changes in housing benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have received several letters about the changes to housing benefit. Housing benefit policy is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

49. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Glasgow district council regarding the effects of the changes in housing benefit on the management of its housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

SHARPEN Report

28. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish his findings on the SHARPEN report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report on the Scottish Health Authorities Review of Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties — the SHARPEN report — is a working document that is under consideration by the Scottish Health Service Planning Council. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to receive the planning council's advice about the report and its recommendations shortly.

Hospital Building

29. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish National Health Service hospitals were built in the last year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Details of all hospital developments are not held centrally as minor capital projects are delegated to health boards. Four major projects were completed and opened in 1987.

Scottish Bus Group

30. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will make a statement on his detailed timetable proposals for the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend does not yet have detailed timetable proposals for the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group, although he proposes to seek powers at an early opportunity. We are still considering the best arrangements for privatisation.

Oil Fabrication Industry

32. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps he is taking to ensure the future of the oil fabrication industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The best tonic for the oil fabrication industry is an economic climate which encourages investment and development in the North sea: and that is what this Government are providing, notably through the oil taxation changes announced in the Budget.

Nuclear Waste

33. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when officials of his Department will next meet Nirex to discuss plans for nuclear waste disposal in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Office officials have no plans to meet Nirex for this purpose, but meet it from time to time with representatives of other Government Departments to discuss radioactive waste management in a United Kingdom context.

Nursery Education

34. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for increasing the provision of nursery education in Scotland; and what percentage of three and four-year-olds he expects to have the opportunity to receive nursery education in 1990, 1995 and 2000.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The level of provision for nursery education is for education authorities to determine in the light of their assessment of relative priorities. I cannot predict the aggregate effect of their decisions in future years.

Community Care

35. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be in a position to announce what policy changes he intends to make following his consideration of the Griffiths report on community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie).

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

38. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chairman and other representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities formally on 4 December 1987 when he discussed the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89 and related matters.

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

39. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his decision on the level of grant to the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on Tuesday, 12 April, *Official Report*, column *46*.

In 1988-89 grant to local councils of social service will be increased by £120,000 and grant to SCVO will be reduced to £90,000. Local councils may purchase services from SCVO. Notwithstanding the reduction in grant, SCVO will receive substantial support from central Government funds in 1988-89 and I am confident that it can continue to make a useful contribution to the promotion of voluntary sector interests.

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

40. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amounts of money paid out by regional and islands councils under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 in each of the last two financial years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Payments by local authorities under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

Regional or Islands Council	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Borders	3,691	3,995
Central	11,135	11,760
Dumfries and Galloway	3,496	4,586
Fife	37,467	37,511
Grampian	18,882	25,597
Highland	5,572	12,189
Lothian	42,425	56,645
Strathclyde	386,659	447,457
Tayside	13,603	13,633
Orkney	516	520
Shetland	7,620	2,989
Western Isles	3,723	6,183
Scotland	534,789	623,065

Electoral Registration

41. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals for action to combat the decline in the numbers on the electoral register in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The preparation of electoral registers is the statutory duty of the electoral registration officers. My right hon. and learned Friend is confident that their aim is to produce as comprehensive and accurate a register as possible, and proposes to support them as before with appropriate publicity campaigns.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

42. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not done so, though officials of his Department met representatives of the association last month.

Tree-Planting Policy

43. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Forestry Commission to discuss planting policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of the Forestry Commission from time to time to discuss various matters.

National Farmers Union

46. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next discuss the future of the agriculture industry with the National Farmers Union of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: My noble Friend the Minister of State and I regularly meet the union. We both attended the 75th anniversary dinner in Glasgow on 10 March and my noble Friend addressed the annual general meeting the following day. My noble Friend last met the union's president on 8 April for a discussion on a range of current issues and plans to continue to meet him and his colleagues at regular intervals.

Police Strength

47. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of police forces in Scotland which are below their establishment levels.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 31 March 1988, five Scottish forces were operating below their authorised establishments. The details are as follows:

Force	*Authorised establishment*	*Actual strength*	*Difference*
Dumfries and Galloway	344	343	−1
Lothian and Borders	*2,435	2,419	−16
Northern	620	600	−20
Strathclyde	6,954	6,775	−179
Tayside	1,001	991	−10

* This figure includes an increase in establishment of 50 constables approved in March 1988. These posts are due to be filled during the course of 1988-89.

Housing Stock

48. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide additional finance for housing authorities to accelerate repair, maintenance and rehabilitation schemes in the public sector housing stock in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 28 March, I announced details of the final housing capital allocations for 1988-89 for all district and islands councils. Allocations in respect of the housing revenue account block, which covers capital expenditure by local authorities on their own stock, totalled £445·2 million, an increase of £58 million on the provisional allocations issued in December 1987. These allocations are not hypothecated fior specific purposes and it is for each authority to determine its own priorities and to programme expenditure accordingly within the resources available to it.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped Patients

50. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet each of the Scottish health boards so as to discuss funding arrangements for long-stay mentally ill and mentally handicapped patients going into community care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend, I regularly meet health board chairmen to discuss a range of matters. Local arrangements for the funding of community care of former long-stay, mentally ill and mentally handicapped patients are matters for health boards and local authorities to determine from within the considerable resources which we make available to them and which have been increased substantially since 1979.

Private Companies (Departmental Relationships)

51. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the procedures governing relationships between his Department and private companies.

Mr. Rifkind: No. I see no need to review the present procedures, which are well understood and effective.

Aerosols

52. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to ban the use of aerosols in the buildings of the Scottish Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Tobacco

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies his Department has carried out on the effectiveness of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 in preventing the purchase of tobacco products by children under the age of 16 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Amniocentesis Tests

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), 22 February, *Official Report*, column *104*, he has now given instructions for the information about women who have been amniocentesis tests to be centrally held and periodically published in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

A 1

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in plans to upgrade

the A1 on the northern side of the border; and whether the proposals will extend the redevelopment as far as Lamberton in Berwickshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Over the last seven years five major improvement schemes, plus several minor improvements, have been completed on the A1. There are proposals for a bypass of Cockburnspath, currently the subject of a public local inquiry, and for junction improvements on the Haddington bypass. Planned improvements do not extend to Lamberton.

Monofilament Net Ban

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions, and for what reasons, the Crown has sought postponements in proceedings in the Appeal Court relating to the monofilament net ban.

Lord James Douglas-Hamiliton: The case has not yet been called in the Appeal Court, having been twice withdrawn, by common consent, from the roll of cases. The reason for the delay is the need to obtain official English translations of two analogous European cases, which recently came before the European Court of Justice. These are considered to be essential to a proper consideration of the instant case by the Appeal Court. The case will be re-enrolled as soon as possible.

Dounreay

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make his announcement over the planning application and reporter's report for the European demonstration reprocessing plant, applied for by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels Limited, at the nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The full report of the public local inquiry into the proposed siting of the European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay was submitted by the reporter on 30 March to my right hon. and learned Friend, who now has it under careful consideration. It is not possible to say when he will be in a position to announce his decision.

Sheriffs

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the general public statutes and law reports made available to sheriffs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sheriff court libraries are supplied with all Acts of Parliament and statutory instruments relating to Scotland. Subject to the requirements of the judiciary the following law reports are supplied: "Scots Law Times", "Session Cases", "Scottish Criminal Case Reports", "Scottish Civil Law Reports", "Greens Weekly Digest" and "Road Traffic Reports". In addition the larger courts receive copies of "All England Law Reports", "Common Market Law Reports" and the "Common Market Law Review".

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what precise role he will have in determining the research, development and utilisation of nuclear power in Scotland if his proposals for the privatisation of the electricity generating and supply industry are implemented.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind: After privatisation the electricity supply industry will continue to be responsible for decisions about its own research and development and the operation of its nuclear power stations. The Government's role in energy research and development will remain the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report of his review into cardiac surgery provision in Scotland will be available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The National Specialist Services Advisory Committee has undertaken a review of cardiac surgery provision and is now preparing a full report which I expect to receive in the summer.

The committee is recommending that the volume of cardiac surgery undertaken in Scotland be increased over the next five years, and that facilities be provided for an additional 400 operations per year. I have decided that as part of our determined attack on waiting lists, the cardiac surgery unit at Aberdeen royal infirmary will be centrally funded to carry out 150 heart operations per year in the near future and 300 operations per year within 5 years. Funding of the centre at Edinburgh royal infirmary will be increased to allow an additional 140 operations to take place there. Last year 2,125 operations were undertaken in Scotland.

We shall be considering the committee's other recommendations when their full report is available.

District Authorities (Statistics)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* for each district authority in Scotland for the latest year for which figures are available, showing *(a)* the electorate and estimated population, *(b)* expenditure per elector on environmental health services, housing maintenance, leisure and recreation, *(c)* the level of district rate and rate support grant, *(d)* the number of council houses and the average rent and *(e)* the number of new council houses completed.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* The information for the year 1987-88 is set out in the table.

District Councils	Number on Electorate Roll at 15 February 1987	Total estimated population 30 June 1987	Expenditure per elector on environmental health services 1987-88 £	Expenditure per elector on housing maintenance 1987-88 £	Expenditure per elector on leisure and recreation 1987-88 £	District Rate Poundage 1987-88 P	Rate Support Grant 1987-88 £
Berwickshire	15,020	18,833	1·53	23·50	26·70	9·5	404,530
Ettrick and Lauderdale	26,424	33,441	6·66	38·03	23·99	10·3	737,475
Roxburgh	28,665	35,133	6·45	48·42	31·61	12	1,531,257
Tweeddale	11,854	14,734	4·22	39·82	19·91	9	292,931
Clackmannan	36,946	47,412	9·66	53·65	31·07	17·2	500,520
Falkirk	110,951	143,229	7·38	66·21	32·06	14·5	1,621,467
Stirling	64,047	81,436	9·56	42·91	38·13	22	0
Annandale and Eskdale	28,475	36,162	5·58	25·60	22·86	11	767,602
Nithsdale	43,755	57,293	6·60	45·96	17·39	11	926,339
Stewartry	18,544	23,292	3·18	24·70	16·18	9	407,757
Wigtown	23,196	30,289	4·31	51·56	17·03	8·5	689,769
Dunfermline	97,250	129,049	5·92	51·69	35·43	11·25	1,469,223
Kirkcaldy	116,580	147,963	6·51	73·53	29·16	14·75	2,194,642
North East Fife	52,755	67,578	9·36	40·00	24·09	13·8	1,036,365
Aberdeen City	175,434	213,228	6·37	48·76	37·26	14·5	1,864,770
Banff and Buchan	62,864	83,753	4·01	35·44	24·80	10·5	961,876
Gordon	53,321	71,986	4·80	18·21	12·77	11	1,967,503
Kincardine and Deeside	36,588	48,402	4·67	9·65	23·94	7·2	774,752
Moray	62,908	85,494	4·47	36·50	29·63	9·5	1,230,803
Badenoch and Strathspey	8,378	10,765	4·42	11·34	15·40	9	118,125
Caithness	20,765	27,025	6·02	36·46	19·60	12·5	1,116,500
Inverness	45,409	61,077	5·90	37·88	32·04	9	666,472
Lochaber	14,744	19,117	4·61	54·60	15·60	14·5	366,832
Nairn	7,976	10,310	2·76	22·82	26·20	9·5	276,410
Ross and Cromarty	34,776	47,897	8·86	26·08	28·64	12·5	1,390,285
Skye and Lochalsh	8,842	11,332	5·99	20·70	9·73	11	519,236
Sutherland	10,751	13,085	8·19	24·37	17·39	9	686,590
East Lothian	65,559	81,855	5·28	33·92	34·56	17	1,476,155
Edinburgh City	367,582	438,721	6·50	31·33	31·17	16·2	10,957,830
Midlothian	61,128	81,440	4·06	41·73	42·83	17	3,092,490
West Lothian	104,767	141,684	8·08	36·75	30·77	14·5	3,767,375
Argyll and Bute	49,274	65,737	6·94	40·95	40·79	18	3,692,253
Bearsden and Milngavie	31,853	40,365	3·70	9·48	28·35	14	614,090
Clydebank	38,189	48,573	7·15	76·02	33·60	20	4,333,984
Clydesdale	44,310	58,436	5·91	75·72	35·61	16·75	3,046,767
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	46,136	62,547	4·29	26·29	43·70	16·5	1,406,860
Cumnock and Doon Valley	34,107	43,302	7·21	77·46	34·39	17	2,472,252
Cunninghame	106,060	137,265	7·21	57·55	38·15	20·5	2,746,711
Dumbarton	59,490	79,704	9·21	69·73	38·66	19	554,486
East Kilbride	63,993	81,718	7·25	5·23	41·63	13·75	1,315,033
Eastwood	44,203	57,185	2·96	8·48	25·45	11	947,628
Glasgow City	573,009	715,621	9·31	75·83	47·22	27·5	44,035,585
Hamilton	81,268	107,018	7·17	77·99	36·26	19	3,903,319
Inverclyde	75,605	96,382	6·84	68·39	41·48	16	3,439,404
Kilmarnock and Loudon	63,437	81,186	4·30	76·11	35·15	18·5	2,592,436
Kyle and Carrick	90,290	112,999	8·26	42·56	37·96	17	1,440,430
Monklands	80,280	106,187	7·15	106·49	43·96	18	5,467,392
Motherwell	111,377	147,542	5·40	83·37	37·14	16·5	4,903,780
Renfrew	160,171	201,295	6·99	62·23	41·77	21	7,282,146
Strathkelvin	66,080	89,475	6·48	31·52	40·81	18	3,587,719
Angus	71,661	94,407	5·85	45·63	28·73	12	2,496,545
Dundee City	137,921	175,748	8·04	53·98	34·86	12	7,242,704
Perth and Kinross	94,226	123,607	8·08	39·78	31·23	13·5	2,372,225
Orkney Island	14,975	19,338	6·74	25·44	19·23	53	9,418,557
Shetland Island	16,357	22,429	11·68	155·35	42·12	59	11,061,435
Western Isles	23,685	31,048	3·80	19·67	11·82	74	29,750,471
SCOTLAND	3,994,211	5,112,129	6·96	52·48	35·98	74·75	1,777,322,740

	Number of council houses 30 September 1987	Average rent 1987-88 £	Local authority dwellings completed in 1987-88
District councils			
Berwickshire	2,516	797·86	17
Ettrick and Lauderdale	4,146	721·89	0
Roxburgh	5,574	877·00	0
Tweeddale	1,445	683·03	12
Clackmannan	8,844	745·46	0
Falkirk	30,341	722·36	74

	Number of council houses 30 September 1987	Average rent 1987-88 £	Local authority dwellings completed in 1987-88
Stirling	12,180	783·45	0
Annandale and Eskdale	4,957	857·40	35
Nithsdale	7,625	720·55	66
Stewartry	2,352	855·50	40
Wigtown	4,377	868·56	20
Dunfermline	19,705	764·52	178
Kirkcaldy	23,504	796·79	131
North East Fife	6,805	887·88	65
Aberdeen City	37,206	763·96	93
Banff and Buchan	11,672	811·66	67
Gordon	5,387	785·88	171
Kincardine and Deeside	3,484	745·52	41
Moray	10,205	814·54	34
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,075	796·79	13
Caithness	3,894	771·66	29
Inverness	6,684	830·09	32
Lochaber	3,010	833·56	0
Nairn	1,068	821·02	22
Ross and Cromarty	6,130	824·45	46
Skye and Lochalsh	771	778·53	11
Sutherland	1,716	750·15	33
East Lothian	14,524	764·76	71
Edinburgh City	50,610	791·71	63
Midlothian	11,318	713·00	14
West Lothian	20,475	703·53	8
Argyll and Bute	7,932	821·53	12
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,765	861·99	35
Clydebank	11,361	887·23	0
Clydesdale	9,406	719·94	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,142	853·90	6
Cumnock and Doon Valley	9,751	707·61	6
Cunninghame	22,100	676·71	0
Dumbarton	12,428	759·43	18
East Kilbride	1,363	859·57	0
Eastwood	1,782	647·22	14
Glasgow City	165,749	760·63	0
Hamilton	22,133	772·48	8
Inverclyde	18,361	692·92	64
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	16,561	720·27	0
Kyle and Carrick	16,742	747·95	47
Monklands	27,786	806·13	0
Motherwell	38,259	733·42	0
Renfrew	37,051	675·65	82
Strathkelvin	9,933	795·92	7
Angus	12,951	757·99	40
Dundee City	38,504	707·62	0
Perth and Kinross	14,663	721·70	0
Orkney Island	1,432	831·49	12
Shetland Island	2,634	828·14	20
Western Isles	2,541	911·22	33
Scotland	830,930	758·03	1,790

Notes:

1. Expenditure on environmental health services and leisure and recreation is based on provisional outturns.
2. Housing maintenance expenditure is the budgeted expenditure reported in "Rating review" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (C.I.P.F.A.).
3. Rate poundage after selective action.
4. R.S.G. is after abatement. The figures are R.S.G. entitlements based on provisional expenditure outturns. An Order to give effect to them will be laid shortly.
5. The electoral roll figures exclude attainers which numbered about 62,000 in 1987-88.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People (Training)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration is being given to the needs of disabled people to ensure that an accurate assessment and an appropriate personal action plan is drawn up for them in the new adult training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: The initial assessment of trainees in employment training, leading to the production of individual action plans, will be carried out by a network of training agents. For trainees with disabilities who require specialised or extended assessment which a training agent is unable to deliver, the specialist help of the employment rehabilitation centres and ASSET teams run by the employment rehabilitation service will be available. MSC will expect training agents and training managers to have premises and facilities which are suitable for people

with disabilities as part of their required equal opportunities policy. Help will be available to providers, where necessary, in the form of grants towards the costs of necessary adaptations to premises and equipment, to meet the needs of particular individuals.

Tourism

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage regional tourism.

Mr. Lee: My Department is actively working with the English Tourist Board, the British Tourist Authority and the 12 regional tourist boards to encourage the widest possible spread of tourism throughout England.

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act

Mr. Ilsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding amendments to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Mr. Nicholls: I am, of course, aware of the Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and of the 1987 TUC resolution on health and safety. However, I am not aware of any formal representations regarding amendments to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Job Creation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the ratios of increased jobs in the first three months of 1988 are between *(a)* part-time and full-time, and *(b)* temporary and permanent.

Mr. Lee: The latest available figures are for December 1987. Between December 1986 and December 1987 there was a net increase of 507,000 in the size of the civilian employed labour force in Great Britain. Of this increase 49 per cent. was attributable to growth in part-time employment and 51 per cent. to growth in full-time employment. The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed.

The regularly published employment estimates do not separately identify those in temporary or permanent employment. The labour force survey provides such information on a different basis, and the latest available figures are for spring 1987. Estimates based on the labour force survey indicate that between spring 1986 and spring 1987 there was a net increase of 334,000 in the number of employees and self-employed in Great Britain. Of this increase, the percentages attributable to growths in temporary and permanent employment were 18 per cent. and 82 per cent., respectively.

Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest total number of people unemployed in the constituency of Basildon, and for the same period in each year since 1983.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon in March of each year since 1984. Unemployment statistics for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983. The comparison is affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986.

	Number
March 1984	6,686
March 1985	7,120
March 1986	6,643
March 1987	5,950
March 1988	4,362

TRANSPORT

Panama Canal

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what are the estimated numbers of ships plying to and from the United Kingdom via the Panama canal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is not available. We continue to keep the situation concerning the canal under review in close consultation with British interests.

British Rail

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will urgently review his policies for subsidies to British Rail with a view to improving the quality of its services.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government's policy on subsidising public transport was set out in the response to the Transport Select Committee's report on the financing of rail services (HC 420). Current and planned investment levels in the railways are already higher in real terms than at any time since the 1960s and are designed to bring a significant improvement in the quality of service for the customer.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make a statement on the implications for transport policy of the report of the National Economic Research Associates on the quality of services of British Rail, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has already told the National Union of Railwaymen, which commissioned the National Economic Research Associates report, that he would like to discuss it with it.

Settle-Carlisle Line

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the criteria laid down by the group of local authorities offering financial support to the Settle-Carlisle railway, stating his response in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The local authorities have offered £500,000 towards the capital costs of restoring Ribblehead viaduct, subject to the following conditions:

a. that British Rail continues to maintain and operate the line;
b. that the line's future be guaranteed for a period of at least 20 years;
c. that the contributions are a "one-off" which should not be seen as setting any precedent and no further requests for financial support should be made;

d. that the revenue support contributions already agreed for the next two years will not be extended beyond that period.

My right hon. Friend is still considering this offer and the particular conditions attached to it.

Pulford-Gresford Bypass

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the road bridge over the railway carrying the new Pulford to Gresford bypass will be such that it could accommodate double rail track if necessary.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The crossings of the Wrexham-Chester railway line were each designed to accommodate the single track which British Rail indicated would meet its existing and future operational requirements.

The two bridges carrying the road over the railway line (one in England and one in Wales) might possibly accommodate a second track if the present track was realigned. The feasibility would need to be examined in detail with British Rail. The major bridge in Wales which carries the railway over the bypass could only be single track.

DEFENCE

NATO

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's northern naval defences of the Danish parliamentary decision on 14 April to inform visiting naval captains that Denmark does not accept nuclear weapons on its territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 19 April at column *670*.

Tornado Aircraft (Goose Bay)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tornado aircraft are currently deployed at Goose bay, Canada.

Mr. Freeman: There are currently nine Royal Air Force Tornados deployed at Goose Bay, Canada.

Pay

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the percentage increase in armed forces pay in each year since 1974.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

Pay review in	*Equivalent Percentage Increase for full year*
1974	13
1975	29·5
1976	[1]£6 per week
1977	5
1978	13
1979	32·5
1980	16·8
1981	10·3
1982	6·1
1983	7·2
1984	[2]4·9
1985	7·1
1986	[3]5·6
1987	4·9
1988	6·4

Notes:

[1] £6 per week was equivalent to between 18·3 per cent. for a private and 3·8 per cent. for a colonel on appointment.

[2] A staged increase, the full amount awarded was 7·6 per cent.

[3] A 7·5 increase deferred to 1 July 1986.

Radar Projects

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Blue Yeoman radar project has replaced Cold Witness.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force Tornado F.2 aircraft are currently in storage at RAF St. Athan; what is the reason for their withdrawal from service; what plans exist for their future disposal or use; and what is the estimated cost of implementing these plans.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the course of the initial production run of the Tornado F2 a number of design changes were made to this aircraft type which resulted in a significant improvement in capabilities. The improved aircraft was designated the Tornado F3. Current plans are for all 18 original F2s to be updated in the early 1990s to a standard similar to that of the F3s. Whilst awaiting this upgrading, 14 of these aircraft are in storage at RAF St. Athan. No contract for the work to upgrade these aircraft has yet been negotiated.

Radar

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects to issue tenders for the development and production of a surface-wave over-the-horizon radar for the United Kingdom air defence ground environment.

(2) what discussions are taking place with the United States Navy concerning the establishment of a site in the United Kingdom for a United States Navy relocatable over-the-horizon radar;

(3) what collaboration is taking place between his Department and the United States Air Force systems command on the development and deployment of a north-looking over-the-horizon radar;

(4) what research has been conducted by the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment into the propagation of high frequency radar signals in Arctic regions;

(5) in what year the air defence ground environment senior engineering officers conference first received a briefing on over-the-horizon radar.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom and the United States are collaborating in a joint programme of studies aimed at testing the feasibility of siting, and assessing the

potential value of, an over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom. These studies, in which RSRE Malvern is involved, are still continuing and there are no firm plans for the issue of tenders for further stages. The air defence ground environment senior engineering officer's conference was first briefed on over-the-horizon radar in 1987.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the function and progress of the Blue Yeoman radar project.

Mr. Sainsbury: The name Blue Yeoman covered the development of a long-range air defence radar which entered RAF service some 20 years ago and it is now being phased out. One such radar was retained at RSRE. This radar has undergone a major improvement programme and is being used to carry out research into a number of topics relating to advanced radar techniques and systems applicable to future long-range air defence.

North Atlantic Defence System

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department is making to the United States Air Force Command, control and communications project known as the North Atlantic defence system.

Mr. Sainsbury: The North Atlantic defence system is a NATO programme sponsored by both SACEUR and SACLANT, part of which will comprise communications and command control and information systems. It is eligible for funding through the NATO infrastructure budget, to which the United Kingdom in common with most other NATO nations contributes. Once the systems are in place the United Kingdom would expect operational benefit from NADS and also to make a substantial operational contribution to the effectiveness of the system through links with the United Kingdom air defence ground environment and the E3A AEW aircraft.

RAF Phantom (Crash)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the crash in the North sea of a Royal Air Force Phantom aircraft on Wednesday 20 April.

Mr. Freeman: On 20 April a Royal Air Force Phantom FG1 of 43 Squadron, RAF Leuchars crashed into the North sea during the course of the air defence exercise Elder Forest. Tragically, both crew were killed in the incident.

The Royal Air Force has convened a board of inquiry into this accident, which will examine fully all the circumstances with a view to establishing its cause, and preventing a recurrence. A summary of the board's findings will be published in due course in the usual way.

Menwith Hill, Harrogate

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the agreements authorising the use of Menwith Hill communications base, Harrogate, by the United States National Security Agency.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The use of Menwith Hill by the United States Department of Defence is subject to confidential arrangements between the United Kingdom and United States Government.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* United Kingdom personnel and *(b)* United States personnel are currently employed at Menwith Hill communications base; and what expansion has recently taken place or is planned.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Currently some 850 United States personnel and 340 United Kingdom personnel are employed at Menwith Hill. No significant change in numbers has taken place recently nor is any foreseen.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expenditure in each year on *(a)* capital equipment and buildings and *(b)* revenue for each of the past 10 years at Menwith Hill communications base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Full financial information of the kind requested is not held by the British Government and could only be obtained from the United States authorities at disproportionate cost.

Submarines (Welding Errors)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on *(a)* welding errors in relation to Trafalgar Class submarines at Vickers and *(b)* the loss of Trident parts off Walney Island in the Mull of Galloway.

Mr. Sainsbury: I wrote to the hon. Member on these matters on 25 April.

Federal Radionavigation Plan

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations his Department has made to the United States of America about the federal radionavigation plan published in November 1987.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* None.

Ammunition Transport

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the last occasion on which a lorry loaded with ammunition caught fire on a motorway; if he will name the motorway; if he will describe the incident; what improvements have been made in the arrangements for the safety of ammunition transport since then; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* The last occasion on which a lorry loaded with ammunition caught fire on a motorway was on 30 January 1988 at approximately 06.30 hours about ¼ mile beyond junction 27 of the M4 westbound. The fire was caused by a piece of sound insulation material falling from the engine cover on to the hot turbo-charger which ignited. The vehicle was brought safely to a stop and the fire extinguished using on-board equipment. The civil fire brigade and police attended. The vehicle was stationary on the hard shoulder for approximately 30 minutes and after repair continued on its journey without further incident. No changes to existing safety arrangements were thought necessary following this incident.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when was the last substantive review of the arrangements for the security of ammunition transported by road.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* The security of ammunition transported by road is governed by Statutory Instrument 1977 No. 888 — The Conveyance by Road of Military Explosives Regulations 1977 and detailed guidance and instructions are contained in service regulations. A new health and safety regulation — The Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations is due to replace the present legislation in late 1988 and Ministry of Defence arrangements are being reviewed to ensure they comply with the new requirements.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what checks are undertaken to ensure that drivers of ammunition lorries are not under the influence of alcohol during their journeys.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* Statutory Instrument 1977 No. 888—The Conveyance by Road of Military Explosives Regulations 1977 — and unit standing orders specify that no personnel under the influence of alcohol are to be allowed to handle or convey ammunition. Responsibility for enforcing this regulation rests with the authorised representative at the despatching and receiving points.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the interests of security, he will review the present system for the identification of explosive and projectile ammunition carried by lorries.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* The requirements for labelling explosives, and for externally labelling vehicles carrying explosives, are contained in SI 1983 No. 1140 — Classification and Labelling of Explosives Regulations 1983. The classification of explosives is based upon the United Nations international system of classification, which is kept under periodical review. The hazard classification is displayed in the interests of public safety and a separate review of this particular practice in the interests of security is not considered necessary.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is considering any new security measures for the transport by road of projectile ammunition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 April 1988]:* Security standards for the transport by road of ammunition are laid down in service regulations. These are continually reviewed.

Rimnet

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Rimnet's role in relation to the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The Rimnet system has no role in relation to the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the wartime role of Rimnet.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

There is no specific wartime role for Rimnet.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Local Government Elections

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made since the answer on 2 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *618*, in enabling 'I' voters to exercise their mandate at local government elections in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: I assume that the hon. Gentleman refers to my answer of 4 November, at column *618*. The position remains as previously stated.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 April 1988

WALES

National Health Service

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the performance indicators for the Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office has since 1982 published a booklet of key statistical indicators for NHS management in Wales which shows comparative information on the district health authorities in Wales over a wide range of services. The latest edition of the booklet (No. 6 1987) was published on 21 January and a copy is available in the House of Commons Library.

The Department has also produced its own version of the DHSS computerised performance indicator package, which enables comparisons to be made between England and Wales at regional, district and unit level. A copy of the first edition of this package relating to 1985-86 data is available in the Library of the House and a 1986-87 edition will be issued during the summer.

Performance indicators are intended for use as a management tool for planning services and reviewing achievement. They help identify variations in the way services and resources are used both between authorities and over time. The indicators are intended to raise questions and provide a means of helping to diagnose problems. They do not, indeed cannot, offer any kind of judgment about the relative quality of the services provided, since it must be recognised that a wide and complex range of factors affect this.

As part of the 1988-89 planning process, district health authorities have been asked to set themselves performance targets, by reference, as appropriate, to published performance indicators. These targets will be reviewed as part of the 1988 annual review process and their achievement will be monitored in subsequent years.

Ewe Premium

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to obtain European Community acceptance of a principle whereby the ewe premium is paid on existing flocks and on the number of ewes in the flock on a specified reference date.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Small Firms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the amount of financial assistance given to small firms in Wales in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information on the aid given to small firms in Wales by agencies and Departments other than the Welsh Office is not held centrally. Under the grant schemes directly administered by my Department the following amounts have been offered to small firms[1] in 1987:

	£ thousands
Regional selective assistance	6,404
Regional development grant	36,818
Business improvement services	2,158

[1] Employers of 200 or less (including associated and group companies).

In addition, substantial support is provided to the small firms sector by a number of other Departments and agencies, including the Welsh Development Agency, Mid Wales Development, the Wales Tourist Board, British Coal Enterprise, BSC (Industry) and the Department of Trade and Industry. The recently-launched enterprise Wales intitiative places a special emphasis on support for small firms by way of consultancy, investment and innovation grants.

Rates

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the level that the Welsh non-domestic rate would be in the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh average non-domestic rate poundage for 1988-89 is 257·6p.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in descending order the percentage increase in *(a)* the domestic rate, and *(b)* the commercial rate together with the poundages of each Welsh district in 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: The information requested on domestic and non-domestic rate increase between 1987-88 and 1988-89 for Welsh districts is shown in the following table:

Data for PQ1422 1987-88
(a) The Domestic Rate

Local authority	*1987-88 Domestic poundage (p)*	*1988-89[1] Domestic poundage (p)*	*Percentage change 1987-88 to 1988-89*
Neath	235·68	287·87	22·14
Swansea	251·04	295·43	17·68
Lliw Valley	243·89	285·83	17·20
Port Talbot	245·84	283·82	15·45
Meirionydd	200·65	228·77	14·01
Aberconwy	210·16	238·32	13·40
Arfon	205·30	231·38	12·70
Dwyfor	209·81	234·79	11·91
Monmouth	211·60	235·86	11·47
Ynys Mon	204·52	227·82	11·39
Torfaen	218·78	241·58	10·42
Glyndwr	210·96	232·20	10·07
Islywn	212·00	233·00	9·91
Newport	212·04	232·01	9·42
Radnor	195·25	213·42	9·31
Blaenau Gwent	219·78	239·89	9·15
Brecknock	207·01	225·45	8·91
Rhymney Valley	239·34	258·85	8·15
Wrexham Maelor	216·49	233·69	7·94
Alyn and Deeside	209·97	226·58	7·91
Ogwr	241·64	260·55	7·83
Cardiff	192·15	207·05	7·75
Llanelli	235·13	252·44	7·36
Carmarthen	221·04	236·67	7·07
Montgomeryshire	192·23	205·82	7·07
Vale of Glamorgan	199·42	213·48	7·05

Local authority	1987-88 Domestic poundage (p)	1988-89[1] Domestic poundage (p)	Percentage change 1987-88 to 1988-89
Delyn	214·70	228·45	6·40
Merthyr Tydfil	239·46	254·76	6·39
Taff Ely	240·91	255·83	6·19
Rhondda	243·50	258·50	6·16
Cynon Valley	232·45	246·73	6·14
South Pembroke	220·22	233·08	5·84
Rhuddlan	215·18	227·42	5·69
Ceredigion	217·70	229·55	5·44
Colwyn	227·59	239·60	5·28
Dinefwr	216·91	227·66	4·96
Preseli	216·70	226·84	4·68
TOTAL WALES	218·07	238·76	9·49

[1] 1988-89 figures are provisional.

Data for PQ1422 1987-88
(b) The non-domestic rate

Local authority	1987-88 Non-domestic poundage (p)	1988-89[1] Non-domestic poundage (p)	Percentage change 1987-88 to 1988-89
Neath	254·18	306·37	20·53
Swansea	269·54	313·93	16·47
Lliw Valley	262·39	304·33	15·98
Port Talbot	264·34	302·32	14·37
Meirionnydd	219·15	247·27	12·83
Aberconwy	228·66	256·82	12·32
Arfon	223·80	249·88	11·65
Dwyfor	228·31	253·29	10·94
Monmouth	230·10	254·36	10·54
Ynys Mon	223·02	246·32	10·45
Torfaen	237·28	260·08	9·61
Glyndwr	229·46	250·70	9·26
Islwyn	230·50	251·50	9·11
Newport	230·54	250·51	8·66
Radnor	213·75	231·92	8·50
Blaenau Gwent	238·28	258·39	8·44
Brecknock	225·51	243·95	8·18
Rhymney Valley	257·84	277·35	7·57
Wrexham Maelor	234·99	252·19	7·32
Alyn and Deeside	228·47	245·08	7·27
Ogwr	260·14	279·05	7·27
Cardiff	210·65	225·55	7·07
Llanelli	253·63	270·94	6·82
Carmarthen	239·54	255·17	6·53
Vale of Glamorgan	217·92	231·98	6·45
Montgomeryshire	210·73	224·32	6·45
Merthyr Tydfil	257·96	273·26	5·93
Delyn	233·20	246·95	5·90
Taff Ely	259·41	274·33	5·75
Rhondda	262·00	277·00	5·73
Cynon Valley	250·95	265·23	5·69
South Pembrokeshire	238·72	251·58	5·39
Rhuddlan	233·68	245·92	5·24
Ceredigion	236·20	248·05	5·02
Colwyn	246·09	258·10	4·88
Dinefwr	235·41	246·16	4·57
Preseli	235·20	245·34	4·31
TOTAL WALES	236·47	257·60	8·93

[1] 1988-89 figures are provisional.

Grant-related Expenditure Allocation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in rank order the budgeted spending per head over grant-related expenditure allocation at ratepayer level for Welsh local authorities on the same basis as the criteria announced on 17 November in respect of the phasing out of domestic rates.

Mr. Grist: The difference between budgeted expenditure and grant-related expenditure for 1987-88, per head and at ratepayer level, is as follows:

	Difference
Port Talbot	56
Swansea	46
Lliw Valley	39
Rhondda	26
Llanelli	24
Merthyr Tydfil	24
Neath	23
Rhymney Valley	23
Taff Ely	22
Blaenau Gwent	21
Colwyn	19
Ogwr	17
Torfaen	17
Wrexham Maelor	14
Glyndwr	12
Delyn	12
Islwyn	11
Carmarthen	11
Cynon Valley	10
Rhuddlan	9
Alyn and Deeside	7
Newport	7
Monmouth	6
Dwyfor	3
Ceredigion	3
Meirionnydd	1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1
Aberconwy	1
Dinefwr	0
South Pembrokeshire	−1
Arfon	−1
Ynys Môn	−2
Brecknock	−4
Vale of Glamorgan	−8
Radnor	−13
Montgomeryshire	−18
Cardiff	−22

My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, announced on 25 April that the threshold in England for inclusion within the residual rating arrangements will be increased so that only those areas where combined budgeted expenditure for 1987-88 of the authorities operating in that area exceeded the combined needs assessments for the area by more than £200 per head will be affected. In any case, part IV of the Local Government Finance Bill is not applicable to Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Flecknote

Q98. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Flecknote, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Vacant Land

Q99. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to a publicly owned site of vacant land.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

British Time

Q152. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Prime Minister what interdepartmental consultation she has established to assess the financial and commercial consequences of British time being one hour behind the rest of Europe.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explained in a reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 31 March, at column *683*, all Departments are being asked to consult interested groups as to the likely effect of harmonising summer time, and time in general, with other members of the Community.

Engagements

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Benefits

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will provide for better co-ordination of benefits for those on the community programme, by ensuring that social security benefits are as payable by the Department of Health and Social Security to participants for the first week as unemployment benefit is payable in similar circumstances.

The Prime Minister: Unemployment benefit ceases to be payable as soon as a person joins the community programme. Similarly, title to income support ceases immediately where the work is for more than 24 hours a week. Because both benefits are normally paid fortnightly in arrears, a person joining the community programme will receive his last benefit payment either immediately before joining the programme or during the first week.

European Community (Unemployment)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy at the next meeting of the European Council to call for an inquiry into the level of unemployment in the EEC by comparison with the European Free Trade Association group of European countries; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Care

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he is yet in a position to publish the outcome of his review of the case for extending to the voluntary sector the arrangements for disclosure of information about those seeking to work with children; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what safeguards have been devised to ensure that employers in the voluntary sector respect the confidentiality of information disclosed to them by the police under the arrangements for disclosure of information about those seeking to work with children.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department is currently discussing with representatives of the voluntary sector detailed plans for the setting up of a national unit on a pilot basis which would act as a contact point between the police and selected voluntary organisations on the disclosure of information from police records on those seeking to work with children. These discussions will cover arrangements for ensuring that the confidentiality of information disclosed will be respected.

Remand Centres and Open Prisons

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of the proposals invited for the construction of private urban remand centres and open prisons emanate from non-United Kingdom companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of submitted proposals for the construction of private urban remand centres and open prisons involves the conversion of existing property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All but one of some 40 invitations to submit proposals for the construction of urban remand centres and open prisons were sent to companies registered in the United Kingdom. An advertisement was also placed in the *EC journal*, and a press release was sent to national newspapers and trade journals, It is not possible to say what proportion of the proposals may involve the conversion of existing property until the responses have been received and analysed.

Police Interviews (Tape-recording)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations now operate the procedure for tape-recording interviews with suspects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

The rate at which tape-recording is implemented in individual force areas is for chief officers to decide having regard to the available resources and after consulting other agencies in the criminal justice system.

I understand that, as at 31 March 1988, most forces in England and Wales had begun phased implementation programmes, and that two forces were tape-recording interviews at stations throughout their force areas. I further understand that the small number of forces, which have not yet started pilot tape-recording schemes, plan to do so over the next few months. It remains the intention to secure full implementation of tape-recording arrangements throughout England and Wales by 1991.

Children (Penal Custody)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many regions sentenced no 14-year-olds to penal custody in the last year for which information is available.

Mr. John Patten: The central records available to me for 1986, which may be incomplete, show no custodial

sentences imposed on males aged 14 by the courts in four of the 43 police force areas in England and Wales: City of London, Gloucestershire, Suffolk and Warwickshire. Custodial penalties are not available for female offenders aged 14.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the subsequent criminal behaviour of 14-year-olds who have been sentenced to penal custody over the past 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information relates to detention centre trainees aged 14 to 16 reconvicted within two years of discharge from a prison department establishment and is published in table 8.8 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1986" (Cm. 210), copies of which are in the Library. Information specific to 14-year-olds could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Television

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many hours of television are produced for regional consumption by BBC Wales—Cymru and HTV Wales in 1988; and what are his estimates for each year to 1992.

Mr. Renton: The most recent available information is as follows. In 1987 HTV Wales produced for broadcast by the IBA 391 hours of regional interest material, and in the year ending 31 March 1988 410 hours of Welsh regional service material were broadcast on BBC1 and BBC2. In addition HTV produced 455 hours and the BBC 520 hours for broadcast by S4C. The additional information sought is not readily available.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what categories of programmes are excluded from contributing to the independent producers 25 per cent. target announced in November 1986;

(2) what categories of programmes are excluded when calculating the total hours of new programmes produced by broadcasters for the purpose of assessing the proportion to be produced by independent broadcasters announced in November 1986.

Mr. Renton: Both the BBC and the IBA have accepted, subject to satisfaction on the cost and quality of programmes provided by independent producers, the target of commissioning from them by the end of 1992 25 per cent. of original television output, drawn from a wide range of programmes but excluding, in the case of programmes broadcast by the BBC, news and news-related daily current affairs programmes, continuity and Open University output. In the case of programmes broadcast on ITV, material provided by ITN, continuity, the news-related studio output of TV-am and regional service material provided out of regional newsrooms will be outside the 25 per cent. target, but the IBA does not rule out the possibility that independent producers may contribute material in these categories.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the total number of new programmes produced by the BBC and ITV companies in 1988; and what are his forecasts for each year to 1992, showing in each case the total number of hours.

Mr. Renton: The most recent available information relating to programmes originated for network broadcast on BBC and ITV is as follows. In the year ending 31 March 1988 6,065 hours of such programmes were broadcast on BBC1 and BBC2, and in 1987 3,165 hours were broadcast on ITV (including programmes provided by ITN but not by TV-am). Present BBC plans envisage an increase to 6,241 hours by 1992. Comparable forecasts for ITV are not readily available.

Passports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that Mrs. Margaret Cynthia Moss of 9 Dungannon Drive, Thorpe Bay, Essex, who submitted her passport for renewal on 6 February receives her passport as soon as possible; and if he will consider establishing a procedure for cases of urgency so long as the current delays in passport applications and renewals continue.

Mr. Renton: The passport was returned by registered post on 25 April. As Mrs. Moss had not indicated a date of travel on the application form, her application was not accorded the priority it would otherwise have received under existing procedures.

Member's Correspondence

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate will receive a definitive answer in respect of Mr. S. Taggert, Home Office reference number T160429, about whom a letter was sent on 25 March.

Mr. Renton: A reply will be sent shortly.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reply to the letter dated 7 December 1987 from the hon. Member for East Lothian concerning an application for naturalisation by Miss Anne-Margarethe Stroobants.

Mr. Renton: The application was approved in January, and a certificate sent to the applicant in March after she had taken the oath of allegiance. The certificate has, however, recently been returned, because the applicant had left her last known address.

I shall be replying shortly to the hon. Member's letter.

Lotteries

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received from experts in the running of state lotteries for charitable purposes; and what consideration he is giving to any such representations;

(2) what recent consideration he has given to the running of a national state lottery to raise and distribute funds for good causes.

Mr. John Patten: As far as I am aware, none of the representations about state lotteries for charitable purposes which we have received in the past year has been from people expert in running such lotteries. We keep the question of running a national state lottery under review but have no current plans to introduce one.

Offensive Weapons

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of individuals and organisations to whom Mr. F. J. Warn, an official in his office, wrote on 7 March, concerning offensive weapons and the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The list for the letter of 7 March is as follows:

The Retail Consortium
British Sports and Allied Industries Federation
British Toy and Hobby Manufacturers Association Ltd.
Gun Trade Association Ltd.
British Importers Confederation
British Wholesale Traders Association
Federation of Wholesale and Industrial Distributors
Mail Order Traders Association
Co-operative Union Ltd.
Association of Toy, Stationery and Fancy Goods Wholesalers
British Cutlery and Silverware Association
Whitby and Co.
Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of County Councils
British Hardware and Homeware Association
Martial Arts Commission
British Veterinary Association
British Antique Dealers Association Ltd.
Association of Chief Police Officers
A number of Government Departments

Officials subsequently wrote to a number of other organisations in the same terms including the Angling Foundation, the National Anglers Council and the London and Provincial Antique Dealers' Association Ltd.

TRANSPORT

Airedale Route

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a further announcement about sections of the A629-A650 Airedale route to the east of Crossflatts, Bingley.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement in the summer. It should be followed shortly thereafter with the publication of draft orders for Airedale stage 3 (Crossflatts to Cottingley Bar).

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles are currently licensed for public highway use in Britain, and if he will express the figures by class of vehicle.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At 31 December 1987 there were 22,151,831 vehicles licensed for use on the road in Great Britain. The main classes are as follows:

	Number
Private/Light Goods:	19,249,459
Motorcycle	977,728
Heavy Goods:	608,857
Hackney (includes buses and coaches)	129,012
Other vehicles subject to duty:	442,447
Vehicles exempt from duty (includes emergency service vehicles and exemptions for the disabled):	744,328

Coaches (Speed Limiters)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if speed limiters are to be fitted on all coaches regardless of age.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on 18 April, at columns *364-65*.

Vehicles (British Standards)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the light transmission requirements embodied in BS4110 will be applied to all roadgoing vehicles; and when the noise limits embodied in BSAU193T2 will be applied to all roadgoing vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These British standards are being applied where they are relevant. In the case of BS4110, this is motor cyclists' eye protectors. Other standards apply to light transmission requirements for motor vehicles. BSAU193 sets standards for replacement exhaust systems and silencers for motor cycles which are not appropriate to other vehicles.

Life-jackets

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether life-jackets carried on helicopters and aircraft operating over the North sea are required to meet the criteria described in specification No. 5, issue 2, dated 23 November 1979 issued by the airworthiness division of the Civil Aviation Authority; if he will define the use of the term "choppy sea" and the term "disturbed water" contained in paragraph 7.1 of the specification document, according to wave height; and whether this specification has been superseded;

(2) if he will be reconsidering the specifications relating to life-jackets in the near future; and if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that legislation requires life-jackets to keep the wearer's head clear of the water even if the wearer is unconscious and the water is rough or choppy.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department of Transport is responsible for the approval of life-jackets carried in United Kingdom registered ships and the Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the approval of life-jackets carried in aircraft.

The specifications for Department of Transport or CAA approved life-jackets have both for many years required the support of an unconscious person in a seaway in an effective manner. Experience to date has not suggested that their performance was in question. However, the findings of a recent research project commissioned by the Department of Energy suggest that in certain rough sea conditions these life-jackets may not be as effective as previously thought.

My Department therefore intends to give very serious consideration to the findings of this particular research project to determine whether changes to the specifications for ship life-jackets are now necessary.

The Civil Aviation Authority has confirmed that aircraft life-jackets are required to meet the criteria described in CAA specification No. 5, issue 2, which has not been superseded. The terms "choppy sea" and

"disturbed water" in the specification are intended to mean sea state 3, which is consistent with wave heights of 3 to 5 ft and a mean wind speed of 18 knots.

The authority believes that the specification No. 5 requirements are adequate and life-jackets approved to this standard are satisfactory. The need to ensure compatibility with intended immersion suits is catered for in working draft CAA specification No. 19, issue 1 (dated March 1988) para. 31. Any immersion suit approved by the CAA must be fully evaluated for its compatibility with the intended life-jacket; righting tests being performed by live but limp subjects. Such tests may be more representative of an unconscious person than those achieved using authometric dummies, but the CAA has initiated a review of the various test methods currently used to establish which of these is the most realistic.

Dalton-in-Furness Bypass

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement as to the current position and progress on the Dalton-in-Furness bypass on the A590; whether there has been a delay in determining the route; and what are the estimated dates for laying of the order and public inquiry for commencement and completion of the bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Progress of the scheme has been slightly delayed by the need to investigate further the ground conditions along the proposed route of the bypass. We expect to publish statutory orders towards the year end. If required a public inquiry will be held in mid 1989. Construction could start in 1991 and the road open to traffic in 1993.

Swarthmoor Bypass

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current position and progress on the Swarthmoor bypass on the A590.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to receive our consultant's report on route investigations in June. I shall make a further announcement when we have considered it.

Melton Brow Road Improvement

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current position and progress on the Melton Brow road improvement on the A590 near Lindal-in-Furness.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following a report by Cumbria county council acting as the Department's agent, an improvement scheme has been accepted into the regional trunk road programme. The next stage will be the publication of orders under the Highways Acts towards the end of the year.

Motor Cycles (Leg Protectors)

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of comments made in response to his consultation on motor cycle leg protectors, he is satisfied that there has been no misrepresentation of results in the research carried out by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am completely satisfied that the laboratory's work has been carried out in a totally unbiased manner and to the highest professional standards, including the publication of methodology and results.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made by his Department in preparing the specification for motor cycle leg protectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Further tests have been carried out at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory using a wider variety of vehicles and different angles of collision. The results have continued to confirm the potential benefits of well-designed leg protection. Results of independent testing have also been brought to our attention. More testing will be carried out and will include collisions at higher speeds. We are looking at our technical specification in the light of the expert views we have received and of the continuing research. It is our long-established policy and practice to be thoroughly assured of the safety benefits of any specification before steps are taken to propose it in draft regulations.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy in what form Her Majesty's Government have received assurances from the United States Government that none of the United Kingdom plutonium exported to the United States of America since 1958 under the Anglo-American mutual defence agreement, and arising from civil reactors in the United Kingdom, has been put to any form of defence research in the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 2 July 1984 at column *36*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), 12 April, *Official Report*, column *49*, from which thermal reactors plutonium originated before being used at Sellafield to supplement the fuel for Dounreay fast reactor fuel; and how much thermal reactor plutonium in each year since 1979 has been put to fast reactor fuel fabrication use.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On 31 March 1987 some 6½ tonnes of safeguarded plutonium originating from thermal reactors had been made available for fuel for the Dounreay prototype fast reactor. Some 5½ tonnes of this originated from electricity board reactors and the remainder from reactors operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc. Quantities for individual years can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Coal Imports (Holland)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the amount of coal imported from Holland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Coal imports from the Netherlands were as follows:

	Thousand tonnes
1979	22
1980	23
1981	8
1982	43
1983	86
1984	304
1985	306
1986	218
1987	664

Non-fossil Fuel

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the proposed statutory obligation on the distribution companies to contract for a specified minimum proportion of non-fossil-fuelled generating capacity will include generators using as fuel municipal refuse and other waste as non-fossil-fuelled generators.

Mr. Parkinson: The details of the obligation are still under consideration, but I recognise the potential value of waste as a source of fuel.

Coal Industry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the number of full-time employees in the coal industry; and what proportion of the numbers so employed in 1979 this represents.

Mr. Parkinson: The number of full-time employees in the coal industry at the end of February 1988 was 123,822, which is 43 per cent. of the corresponding number at the end of February 1979.

Life-jackets

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the report prepared by the Robert Gordon institute of technology on life-jackets and immersion suits for the oil industry advisory committee of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have today instructed that copies of the report entitled "Lifejacket/Immersion Suit Combinations — In-water Performance Assessment" be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small Firms

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the various forms of assistance available from his Department for the assistance of small firms; and what is the respective expenditure involved.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We operate a number of schemes which are specifically directed at small firms. Details are set out as follows.

(i) The consultancy initiatives which are available under the enterprise initiative offer financial support to independent companies or groups with fewer than 500 employees for between five and 15 days specialist consultancy in the following key management functions: quality, design, marketing, manufacturing systems, business planning, financial and information systems. DTI pays two thirds of the cost in the assisted areas and urban programme areas and 50 per cent. of the cost outside these areas. Total provision is £274 million over the next three years.

(ii) Regional enterprise grants, which were introduced on 1 April 1988, provide assistance to small firms with fewer than 25 employees for investment and innovation projects in the development areas. Grants of 15 per cent. of the cost of fixed assets in an investment project are available up to a maximum of £15,000. Grants of 50 per cent. of eligible costs in an innovation project are available up to a maximum of £25,000. DTI expenditure on these grants is expected to rise to over £50 million per year by 1990-91.

(iii) The business improvement services (BIS) scheme, which is jointly funded by the DTI and the European regional development fund, comprises a package of measures designed to assist firms with fewer than 200 employees. It includes an element which enables firms to claim grants of up to 70 per cent. of the cost of consultancy advice. The scheme is available to firms located in specified areas of England affected by the decline in the steel, shipbuilding, textiles and fishing industries. More recently BIS has been introduced in west Cornwall following the closure of the Geevor tin mine and in the Thanet travel-to-work area. Total expenditure on BIS will amount to £56·5 million over the period 1984-90, when the scheme will come to an end.

(iv) The competition for small firms merit awards for research and technology (SMART) is open to firms employing fewer than 200. The 100 best ideas put forward will each receive a 75 per cent. grant towards total costs of £50,000 (a maximum grant of £37,500) to develop a new product or process over the course of a year. The closing date for entries is 30 June 1988; the winners will be announced in November 1988. It is expected that after one year about half the winners will go on to a second stage in which the maximum award per firm will be £50,000.

In addition to these specific schemes, small firms may also take advantage of other forms of DTI assistance which is available to firms of all sizes:

Regional selective assistance
The export initiative
The research and technology initiative
The business and education initiative

Small firms in the inner cities are also helped through many of the projects supported by the Government's inner city task force, for which my Department is responsible. Overall expenditure by the task force is expected to total some £16 million in 1988-89.

EC Fusion and Eureka Programmes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress evaluated on the EC fusion and Eureka programmes arising from the Research Council of the European Council of Ministers meeting on 11 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Community's Council of Ministers (Research) in Luxembourg on 11 April. I should like to take the opportunity to give a brief account of the progress achieved on each of the main agenda items as well as the two specifically raised in the question.

On fusion, there was a general exchange of views on the Community's programme of research but no decisions

were taken. The general hope was, however, that there would be further progress at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers (Research) at the end of June.

The Council discussed the relationship between the Community's research programmes and Eureka. There was agreement that the relationship needed to be clearly defined so as to ensure the two complemented each other and to avoid duplication of effort wherever possible. The Commission will prepare further ideas on this for the Council to consider at its next meeting.

The Council adopted a common position on DRIVE, a Community programme of research in the fields of IT and telecommunications applied to road transport. The programme, which will provide Community funding of 60 mecu (£40 million) over a period of three years, should help improve road transport efficiency and safety, and reduce its environmental impact.

On the Community Bureau of Reference, BCR, the Council adopted a common position on an R and D programme costing some 59 mecu (£39 million) over five years in the fields of applied metrology and chemical analysis. This will be important in the context of the completion of the single market, and will assist in the elimination of certain technical barriers to trade.

The Council also took a major step forward in unanimously adopting ESPRIT II, the largest single programme in the Community's 1987-1991 framework programme for R and D. It will over five years provide 1600 mecu (£1,056 million) of Community funding, with matching contributions from industrial partners and other contractors, for projects in micro electronics and peripheral technologies, information processing systems and some "applied" fields, namely, computer-integrated manufacture and integrated information systems. British companies and research institutes will undoubtedly make a major contribution to this programme and will benefit substantially from it. It is important to note that this major programme has a management structure modelled on that already successfully used in the earlier programme, ESPRIT I.

A common position was also adopted on DELTA, an exploratory programme of research extending over a maximum period of two years to apply new technologies including IT to open and distance learning. Community funding will amount to 20 mecu (£13 million).

The science programme, on which the Council adopted a common position, will promote co-operation and exchanges between scientists and laboratories in the Community: the funds will amount to 167 mecu (£110 million) over five years. The programme offers grants for travel, to fund research projects involving laboratories in more than one country and larger grants for specific projects of scientific promise, usually bringing together many laboratories in different Community countries.

In the field of biotechnology, the Council adopted a common position on the revision of the current multiannual research programme (1985-1989) which will increase Community funding from 55 mecu (£36 million) to 75 mecu (£50 million). More generally, it was agreed that the Community should develop a strategy in the area of biological research, taking account of wider international developments in this field. There was also an informal exchange of views on bioethical issues.

The Council had a further useful exchange of views on the joint research centre (JRC). Agreement was reached on the overall financial framework for the JRC's work and the Council gave further directions for the reforms which are needed to make the JRC successful and viable. We hope that it will be possible for the Council to reach agreement in June on improvements which will give scientific and technological value for money for the considerable Community investment there.

The Commission was also invited to prepare ideas for the Council on the relationship of technical norms and standards to technological developments in Europe, an issue which also has a bearing on the development of the single market.

Economic League

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the Crown Prosecution Service will now begin prosecution of the Economic League for failure to file accounts and failure to complete an annual return; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: As the latest accounts and annual return for the Economic League have now been received and are on the public record, it is not intended to bring proceedings in this matter.

Voluntary Restraint Agreements

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions have taken place within or at the time of meetings of the Council of Ministers, on inter-industry voluntary restraint agreements, and within or at the time of which meetings.

Mr. Alan Clark: Inter-industry voluntary restraint agreements are negotiated by the industries concerned. I am not aware of any recent discussion within or at the time of meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column 478, by what means the Government informed the industries concerned with certain voluntary restraint arrangements that they saw no case for continuation; and whether they will place copies of such communications in the Library.

Mr. Alan Clark: The industries concerned were informed in writing through their trade associations. I have placed copies of these letters in the House Library.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will place in the Library a copy of the arrangements on footwear concluded between the industry concerned and the Republic of Korea, and a copy of the proposals for their renewal.

Mr. Alan Clark: This is a matter for the United Kingdom footwear industry and its counterpart in the Republic of Korea between whom the voluntary agreement is negotiated.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what form restraint agreements negotiated by the European Commission on behalf of the United Kingdom are notified to *(a)* the House and *(b)* the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Mr. Alan Clark: The contents of the informal voluntary restraint arrangements negotiated by the Commission on behalf of the United Kingdom are confidential and are not published.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will list those restraint agreements negotiated by the European Commission in addition to the multi-fibre arrangement in certain limited textiles and clothing, giving the date of commencement and extent of each such agreement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Community has negotiated the following informal restraint arrangements on textile and clothing products. Apart from the arrangement with China, these arrangements cover trade in multi-fibre arrangement (MFA) products with the Community's preferential trading partners (with whom there is no separate bilateral MFA agreement). The restraint arrangement with China is linked to the EC/China bilateral textiles agreement, but relates to a product which is not classified in Customs terms as a textile product. Details of these arrangements are not published.

Turkey

Textile products: cotton yarn, certain cotton fabrics and acrylic yarns[1].

Present arrangements commenced 1 January 1987 (1 January 1988 for cotton yarn)

Egypt

Cotton yarn, cotton fabric and bed linen[1]. Present arrangement commenced 1 January 1987 (1 January 1988 for cotton yarn).

Malta

Trousers[1]. Present arrangement commenced 1 January 1988.

Morocco

Trousers[2]. Present arrangement commenced 1 January 1987.

Tunisia

Cotton fabric and trousers[3]. Present arrangement commenced 1 January 1987.

China

Surgical dressings. The restraint arrangement was negotiated at the same time as the current bilateral textile agreement with China and commenced 1 January 1984.

[1] Other products in these arrangements are subject to surveillance licensing. Coverage may differ between the United Kingdom and other member states.

[2] Coverage may differ between the United Kingdom and other member states.

[3] Coverage may differ between the United Kingdom and other member states. Certain other member states have special arrangements for goods subject to outward processing.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the United Kingdom asked the Commission of the European Communities to negotiate restraints on leather footwear from certain Eastern European countries; and on what date such restraints came into effect.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1975 the United Kingdom footwear industry negotiated bilateral arrangements with its counterparts in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania to restrain imports of men's leather footwear during 1976. Further restraint arrangements were made covering women's and children's leather footwear during 1977. From 1977 the European Commission has annually renegotiated a continuation of these arrangements on behalf of the United Kingdom industry.

Car Telephones

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate how many *(a)* car and *(b)* portable telephones were purchased in Britain for the first three months of the current year; and if he will express the figures as a percentage change for the same period for each of the last three years.

Mr. Butcher: There are no official statistics but the information I have is as follows:

	Number of units 1988 First quarter
Mobile telephones	33,000
Portable telephones	17,000

Note: Includes transportable and hand portable.
Source: BIS Mackintosh Ltd.

Information comparing these figures with figures for the same period in each of the last three years is not available.

Investment

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the level of investment by insurance companies and pension funds, as a percentage of total investment for each year since 1970; and what information he has as to comparable figures for *(a)* the European Economic Community, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan, *(d)* India, *(e)* South Korea, *(f)* Taiwan, *(g)* Bangladesh, *(h)* Pakistan and *(i)* South America.

Mr. Maude: The table shows net investment by insurance companies and pension funds as a percentage of total gross domestic fixed capital formation (excluding that by general government) for the United Kingdom.

Comparable figures for the other countries and areas listed in the question are not easily available. Some figures on financial accounts are published by the OECD for member countries but separate figures for insurance companies and pension funds are not given for all members. Data on fixed capital formation are published by the IMF for its members although a few are unable to supply these statistics. The relevant publications are "Financial Accounts of OECD Countries" and "International Financial Statistics", copies of which may be obtained from the Library of the House.

Net investment by insurance companies and pension funds, 1970-87 as a percentage of GDPCF (other than by general government)

	Percentage
1970	25
1971	26
1972	30
1973	27
1974	27
1975	32
1976	34
1977	35
1978	35
1979	36
1980	35
1981	41
1982	40
1983	40
1984	37

	Percentage
1985	36
1986	40
1987	37

Sources: DTI and CSO.

Note.—There are some breaks in the series due to definitional changes. The main ones are between 1983 and 1984 and between 1984 and 1985.

Life Assurance and Unit Trusts Regulatory Association

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if a decision has been reached on whether to give leave for the recognistion of the Life Assurance and Unit Trusts Regulatory Association.

Mr. Maude: In accordance with the procedure laid down in the Financial Services Act, the Director-General of Fair Trading has reported on the rules and guidance submitted by LAUTRO to the SIB in support of its application for recognition as a self-regulating organisation. The director-general has reported that, as amended, LAUTRO's rules do not and are not likely or intended to have significant anti-competitive effects. Having had regard to the director-general's report, the Secretary of State has concluded that on the basis of the information presently available, LAUTRO's rules and guidance do not have, and are not intended or likely to have, to any significant extent, the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition. The Secretary of State also has had regard to European Community considerations. Her Majesty's Government and the Commission have a common objective in promoting full competition and transparency in the marketing of life assurance. In order to comply with Community law LAUTRO will be notifying shortly its rules formally to the Commission in order to seek an exemption under article 85 EEC. The Commission will examine them, having regard to Community competition law and practice and the particular circumstances of the EEC insurance market as a whole. Against this background the Secretary of State has therefore today given leave to the SIB for the recognition of LAUTRO as a self-regulating organisation.

The director-general has also made a separate report on the rules and guidance submitted by LAUTRO in support of its application for recognition as a self-regulating organisation for friendly societies. Having had regard to this report, the Secretary of State has concluded that on the basis of the information presently available LAUTRO's rules and guidance do not have, to any significant extent, the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition. The Secretary of State has also therefore today given consent to the SIB for the recognition of LAUTRO as a self-regulating organisation for friendly societies.

Unichem

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to make a decision as to whether to institute proceedings against Unichem plc for alleged breach of the Prevention of Fraud (Investment) Act 1958.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* My Department has obtained strict undertakings from Unichem to comply with the relevant statutory provisions in future. In the light of these assurances and having regard to all the circumstances, I have decided not to institute proceedings.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether leave has yet been given under section 120(2) of the Financial Services Act for the Securities and Investments Board to make recognition orders in respect of any investment exchanges or clearing houses.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to his reply, 25 April 1988, c. 47]:* My right hon. and noble Friend has now considered, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, reports made by the Director General of Fair Trading on the rules, regulations, guidance and arrangements submitted by the international stock exchange of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland Ltd. and the Baltic Futures Exchange Ltd. and has concluded that on the basis of the information presently available to him he does not consider there is anything in the material submitted which has, or is intended or likely to have, to any significant extent the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition. He has therefore given his leave to the SIB to make recognition orders in respect of both these investment exchanges.

ENVIRONMENT

BAOR Contracts

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to the West German Ministry of Construction to broaden the specifications required to allow British manufacturers to compete on equal terms when tendering for BAOR contracts; and what the result of such representations has been.

Mr. Chope: My Department has made representations both directly to the West German Ministry of Construction and, in common with other NATO partners, to the Federal German Government for the greater use of harmonised standards in respect of electrical and lighting products.

All electrical products which have a European (EC) standard and some with international (IEC) standards, are given the status of a German national (DIN) standard without alteration. However, only the DIN standard can be referred to in documentation because German construction regulations are based on them.

Discussions are continuing. Currently I am seeking to establish a list of those British products which have an EC/IEC standard which is referred to in the German DIN standard.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the value of the electrical and lighting contracts awarded for BAOR premises in 1987; and what proportion of these contracts were placed with *(a)* British and *(b)* German companies.

Mr. Chope: In 1987, of the £1¼ million worth of contracts for specialised electrical and lighting equipment placed directly by the PSA on behalf of the British forces in Germany, approximately £¾ million (60 per cent.) had

been placed with British firms. The bulk of major electrical installation work carried out in Germany is, however, performed through contracts with the Federal Government's construction agencies as required under the status of forces agreement. The total value of work placed by these German authorities with electrical contractors was approximately £11½ million in 1987, but it is not possible to obtain a breakdown of this figure.

Newham (Rates)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for the London borough of Newham *(a)* the rate support grant for 1978-79, expressed in 1987 prices, *(b)* that figure expressed per capita of the population of the borough, *(c)* the same figures, expressed in 1987 prices, for each year since and *(d)* the percentage differences between the figures for each year.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Rate support grant in real[1] terms: 1978-79 to 1988-89
London borough of Newham

	Rate support grant (1987-88 prices) £ million	*Year on year percentage difference in RSG* Percentage	*Rate support grant per capita (1987-88 prices)* £	*Year on year percentage difference in RSG per capita* Percentage
1978-79	96·549		425	
1979-80	90·261	−6·5	388	−8·7
1980-81	89·200	−1·2	401	3·4
1981-82[2]	79·243	−11·2	370	−7·7
1982-83	89·738	13·2	423	14·3
1983-84	71·768	−20·0	341	−19·4
1984-85	86·051	19·9	411	20·5
1985-86	84·844	−1·4	407	−1·0
1986-87[3]	75·875	−10·6	370	−9·1
1987-88	82·445	8·7	402	8·6
1988-89	94·171	14·2	459	14·2

[1] Cash values expressed in constant (1987-88) prices using the GDP deflator.
[2] The system of paying grant changed in 1981-82 when the needs resources and domestic elements of grant were replaced by block grant and domestic rate relief grant.
[3] Grant entitlements changed in 1986-87 following the abolition of the GLC.

Urban Programme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the successfully completed environmental programme schemes funded under the urban programme in 1985-86 and 1986-87 between £10,000 and £30,000 in value in the programme authorities.

Mr. Trippier: The number and total value of approved environmental schemes between £10,000 and £30,000 in urban programme authorities in 1985-86 and 1986-87 was:

1985-86		*1986-87*	
Number	*Value*	*Number*	*Value*
511	£9·29	527	£9·35

These figures may exclude some late approvals, including some projects approved within larger environmental blocks and pools. Information about successfully completed schemes is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Small Shops

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the powers under which a local authority can offer financial assistance to the owner of a small shop to make it accessible to disabled people.

Mr. Chope: It is for local authorities to consider which powers might authorise the giving of financial assistance for access to the disabled to non-local authority premises. I wrote to the hon. Member on 21 March setting out a number of discretionary powers which might be appropriate for this purpose.

Civil Service Chauffeurs

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many chauffeurs are employed in the Civil Service.

Mr. Chope: There are no central records held for this grade. The Government car service, which provides a chauffeur driven service to Ministers and heads of Department, employs 153 staff in this capacity.

Rates Exemption

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received seeking exemption of buildings used in connection with horse and pony breeding from rates.

Mr. Chope: The campaign by the Thoroughbred Breeders Association and other bodies interested in this matter has been carried on for some years now. Since January this year, however, we have received approximately 100 representations on this subject.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any request from British Coal's Opencast Executive for the relaxation of planning regulations for opencast coal mining.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. British Coal did comment on my Department's draft planning guidance on opencast coal mining. A copy of its letter of 17 June has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Richmond House

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent buying stone for walls and paved areas, trees, shrubs, tubs and compost for the Richmond house office of the Department of Health and Social Security; and what is the latest estimate for the total cost of the building.

Mr. Chope: The cost of buying stone for paved areas and associated walls and steps around Richmond house was £450,000. The cost of buying trees, shrubs, turf and associated materials was £38,000. The current estimate of the total cost of the project is £41·4 million. This includes some additional work and acceleration costs to ensure DHSS occupation by the end of 1987. As I said in my answer on 8 December 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), at column *97*, the final cost will depend on settlement of the final account, including claims still being negotiated.

United States Military Bases

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to recover as promptly as possible the debt of £31 million owing by the United States armed forces to the Property Services Agency from building works on military bases.

Mr. Chope: The steps outlined in paragraph 22 of the Public Accounts Committee's report on "Repayment Arrangements for Works Expenditure for US Forces", published on 20 April, have already yielded a substantial improvement. The estimated deficit at the end of the 1987-88 financial year is between £20 million and £22 million.

Employment

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the calculations made by Mr. H. B. Lloyd in his paper entitled "The Financial Effects of Increasing Employment by One Million," a copy of which was sent to the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Minister for Housing and Planning, in November 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. I am writing to the hon. Member enclosing a comment on Mr. Lloyd's paper which I sent to him in December 1987.

London Boroughs

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the total indebtedness of each of the London boroughs; and if he will express this information also in per capita terms per resident in each case.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the information placed in the Library of the House on 14 March 1988 in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) at column *459*.

Local Authorities (Employees)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take in the light of responses to his consultation paper which proposed an amendment to the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to restrict the rights of the public to inspect at the time of audit, information which a local authority holds about its employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have decided in the light of responses to their consultation paper to seek at the next convenient opportunity an amendment to the Local Government Finance Act 1982 so that, as proposed, all information which an authority holds about its employees would be excluded from public inspection, except information about gross pay, allowances, bonuses and overtime payments, which would continue to be open to inspection at the time of audit. My right hon. Friends consider that such an amendment would strike the right balance between safeguarding personal privacy and providing adequate public inspection for proper accountability.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magnisite Ltd.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will prosecute Magnisite Ltd., operating as Magnivision, for offering for sale ready-made reading spectacles without a prescription from a suitable registered practitioner, under section 21 of the Opticians Act 1958.

The Attorney-General: If the hon. Member has any evidence tending to disclose the commission of a criminal offence, he should give that evidence to the police.

Mr. Anthony Parnes

Mr. Blair: To ask the Attorney-General if he will place in the Library a copy of that part of the evidence submitted by Her Majesty's Government to the Los Angeles court in connection with the extradition proceedings against Mr. Anthony Parnes which was made publicly available in the United States of America.

The Attorney-General: No.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

China

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next hopes to pay an official visit to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit the People's Republic of China.

European Foreign Ministers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his counterparts from the other European Community countries; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 27 April at column *156*.

Tel Aviv (Passport Renewals)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average time taken for the British consulate in Tel Aviv to process an application from a British citizen for the renewal of a passport; and if any measures are being taken to reduce this time.

Mr. Eggar: Routine applications for renewal or replacement of passports are at present processed within an average period of two and a half weeks. More urgent applications are handled within one or two days and emergency cases are dealt with immediately. Staffing improvements are expected soon to reduce the routine waiting period to around one week.

Fentanyl

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place within the Geneva negotiations on chemical and biological weapons about the problems posed by the compound fentanyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The chemical weapons convention will apply to all chemical warfare agents whether or not they are explicitly named. It will also include a verification regime for certain chemicals produced in industry which are assessed to pose a risk to the objectives of the convention. Many detailed aspects of this verification regime remain to be resolved including the implication of chemicals such as fentanyl which are capable of modification. These issues are under consideration in Geneva.

Persian Gulf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has been given by the United States Administration on their plans for broadening the scope of their role in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: We remain in close contact with the United States and other western countries with naval forces deployed in the Gulf. Our common objective remains to ensure the freedom of navigation in international waters. The practicalities of so doing are regularly reviewed.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any evidence of the use of chemical weapons by Iraq in its recent offensive in the Fao peninsula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to examine reports of the recent battle in the Fao peninsula. To date we have no conclusive evidence of the use of chemical weapons in that offensive.

Ethiopian Army (Chemical Weapons)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any representations have been made regarding the use by the Ethiopian Army of chemical weapons, nerve gas, cluster bombs and napalm against people in Eritrea and Tigré.

Mrs. Chalker: No. We have no evidence that the Ethiopian Army intends to use such weapons. The United Kingdom unreservedly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere.

Mr. Abu Jihad

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the involvement of any Israeli Government organisation in the murder of the PLO official Mr. Abu Jihad in Tunisia; and what are the implications for his policy towards access to the United Kingdom of certain categories of Israeli citizens.

Mr. Mellor: Suspicions of Israeli involvement in the murder of Abu Jihad fall short of absolute proof. There are no implications for Israeli visitors to the United Kingdom.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any additions have been made to the staffing of Her Majesty's embassy in Panama in the past six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No additions have been made to the staff accredited to Her Majesty's embassy in Panama.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the current trading situation of British banks in Panama.

Mr. Eggar: We understand that the one British bank in Panama is operating within the same constraints, applied by the Panamanian authorities, as all other banks in Panama.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is currently being offered to British commercial interests in Panama.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy regularly exchanges information with British commercial interests in Panama in the course of its normal contacts, as do other posts overseas.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider providing additional resources to the Commonwealth Institute to enable urgent repairs to the copper roof to be undertaken.

Mrs. Chalker: The nature and urgency of work which may be required on the roof of the main galleries of the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington, is still being studied by the institute, and the implications for the institute's resources are not yet clear.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the amount of grant paid to the Commonwealth Institute in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The total grants-in-aid from the Foreign and Commonwealth Vote for the last five years for the London and Edinburgh operations of the Commonwealth

Institute, including occasional ad hoc elements for special events, redecoration, maintenance and so on were as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	2·665
1986-87	2·673
1985-86	2·515
1984-85	2·350
1983-84	2·518

EMPLOYMENT

Docklands Liaison Group

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people form the Docklands liaison group; what are their names; and what has been their previous experience.

Mr. Nicholls: Currently nine people constitute the Docklands liaison group. With one exception, they had all worked for the Manpower Services Commission or the employment service in east London before joining the group.

The names and grades of the officials concerned are as follows:

	Grade
Mr. R. Mann	Grade 7
Mr. P. Kendrick	SEO
Mr. T. Goepfort	HEO
Ms. C. Hughes	HEO
Ms. J. Crosweller	EO
Mr. N. Reeve	EO
Mr. K. Crossman	EO
Ms. R. Sammons	AO
Mr. G. Rihal	AA

Labour Statistics

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of employment in *(a)* the north-east and *(b)* Houghton and Washington in numerical and percentage terms; and what are the comparable figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: Full working population figures are not available for areas of this size. Employee figures can be given, but only for dates when censuses of employment are taken. At September 1984, the latest date for which census estimates are available, there were 882,700 employees in employment in the north-east; the figure for the Houghton and Washington constituency was 28,400. The figures exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

The earliest estimates on a comparable basis are for September 1981 when the previous census of employment was taken. There were then 940,600 employees employed in the north-east and 28,600 in the Houghton and Washington constituency.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current unemployment and unfilled vacancies figures on his Department's register for the Castleford travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 10 March 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area was 7,947. On 4 March 1988, the number of unfilled vacancies, excluding vacancies of the community programme, registered at jobcentres which closely correspond to the Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area was 385.

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage fall in unemployment in each of the parliamentary constituencies in Cheshire since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants at 8 March 1984 and 10 March 1988, together with the percentage change for each parliamentary constituency in the county of Cheshire. The figures are affected by the change in the coverage of the count in March 1986.

Unemployed claimants

Constituency	*March 1984*	*March 1988*	*Percentage change*
City of Chester	5,495	4,565	−16·9
Congleton	3,211	2,124	−33·9
Crewe and Nantwich	4,674	3,636	−22·2
Eddisbury	5,131	3,444	−32·9
Ellesmere Port and Neston	6,711	4,992	−25·6
Halton	8,245	6,184	−25·0
Macclesfield	3,326	2,344	−29·5
Tatton	3,569	2,699	−29·4
Warrington North	6,641	4,965	−25·2
Warrington South	6,172	4,862	−21·2

Textile Workers

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of full-time and part-time workers employed in the textile industry for each year from 1970.

Mr. Lee: The Department's employment statistics are analysed according to the standard industrial classification (SIC), and the series is broken by the introduction of the 1980 SIC, which reclassified certain activities, including the textile industry. The table gives the available information on the industry on a consistent 1980 SIC basis from June 1971.

Part-time male figures on this basis are available only from the censuses of employment carried out in September 1981 and September 1984, and quarterly thereafter. Comparable figures are not available for dates prior to June 1971.

Employees in employment in the textile[1] industry in Great Britain

Thousands

	Males			*Females*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*All*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*All*
June 1971	—	—	255·4	201·3	42·8	244·1
June 1972	—	—	248·1	192·8	39·7	232·5

	Males			Females		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*All*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*All*
June 1973	—	—	247·8	186·6	43·0	229·6
June 1974	—	—	240·7	176·2	47·8	224·0
June 1975	—	—	218·6	155·6	44·1	199·7
June 1976	—	—	212·3	149·7	41·7	191·4
June 1977	—	—	211·6	151·6	42·6	194·2
June 1978	—	—	202·8	145·6	39·9	185·5
June 1979	—	—	192·6	141·9	37·0	178·9
June 1980	—	—	166·3	127·0	31·4	158·4
June 1981	—	—	140·7	106·4	25·9	132·3
September 1981	136·3	3·5	139·8	106·8	25·5	132·3
June 1982	—	—	130·9	101·3	23·9	125·2
June 1983	—	—	122·7	96·0	20·1	116·1
June 1984	—	—	119·5	94·6	19·4	114·0
September 1984	118·5	2·1	120·6	94·4	19·9	114·3
June 1985	116·8	2·1	118·9	94·3	19·6	113·9
June 1986	117·4	2·4	119·8	95·2	19·2	114·4
June 1987	112·4	2·3	114·7	91·7	15·2	106·9
December 1987[2]	110·4	2·4	112·8	91·9	14·3	106·2

[1] The textile industry is defined as Class 43 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.
[2] The latest date for which estimates are available.

Community Programme

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has had from the organisers of the community programme about problems faced by those seeking work in the programmes as a result of benefit not being paid for the first week of the programme.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received no representations on this matter.

Hospitals (Staffing Levels)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the recommended staffing levels by patient category in English hospitals; and what are the current staffing levels in hospitals within the Pontefract area health authority.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

There are no recommended staffing levels by patient category in hospitals. Although regions have manpower staffing targets, the distribution between staff groups is a matter for regional decision.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 31 March at columns *665-69* which gave staff in post figures by health authority.

SCOTLAND

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each of the five Scottish new towns for the years 1974-75 to 1989-90, actual or estimated figures for housing stock within the host district council area analysed by the following ownership categories *(a)* development corporation, *(b)* district council, *(c)* other public sector, *(d)* owner-occupied and *(e)* private rented.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information on the numbers of domestic subjects on the valuation roll is published in the rating review estimates of income and expenditure summary volume by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for the years to 1987. Details of owner-occupied and private rented stock by district are not available. Estimates for later years are also not available.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* each of the five Scottish new towns *(b)* each of the district councils with new towns and *(c)* Scotland as a whole for the years 1974-75 to 1989-90 inclusive, the actual or estimated (i) capital expenditure, gross and net of capital receipts (ii) revenue expenditure and (iii) capital debt, expressed both in cash and as per capita amounts.

Mr. Lang: I regret that this information is not held in the form requested and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

"The Scotsman" (Break-in)

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Strathclyde as to the progress of inquiries into the break-in at the office of *The Scotsman* newspaper in Queen street, Glasgow, during the weekend of 23-24 April; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Boundary Commission for Scotland intends to conduct any further interim review of parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Boundary Commission for Scotland has informed me that it intends to conduct interim reviews of seven parliamentary constituencies under section 3 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. The constituencies are as follows:

Angus East, and Kincardine and Deeside:
Clackmannan, Dunfermline West, and Perth and Kinross;
Clydebank and Milngavie, and Glasgow Garscadden.

I understand that the reviews have arisen from alterations to local authority boundaries which those of the parliamentary constituencies concerned no longer follow exactly.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Class Sizes

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the average class size for schools in (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) West Germany, (iii) the United States of America and (iv) Japan.

Mr. Dunn: The readily available information is shown in the following table. There are no readily available data for the United States of America.

Country	*Year*	*Class size up to 1st level*[1]	*Class size up to 2nd level*[2]
United Kingdom	1984-85	[3]25·2	[4]21·4
	1985-86	[3]25·9	[4]21·3
Germany, Federal Republic of[5]	1982-83	22·7	[6]27·3
Japan[7]	1984-85	[8]33·3	[6]38·1

[1] Equates broadly with nursery and primary education.
[2] Equates broadly with secondary school education and non-advanced further education.
[3] Covers maintained primary schools in England. Includes classes where more than one teacher may be present.
[4] Covers maintained secondary schools in England. Includes classes where more than one teacher may be present.
[5] Data extracted from reply to a written European Parliamentary Question (1503/84).
[6] Covers lower secondary schools only.
[7] Includes private education.
[8] Covers only primary school education.

Literacy

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the literacy rates for (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) West Germany, (iii) the United States of America and (iv) Japan.

Mr. Dunn: Comparable information on literacy rates in these countries is not available.

Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the expenditure per primary school pupil for each of the years from 1976 to 1986 in Wakefield metropolitan council area.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Net institutional recurrent expenditure per pupil[1] *in primary schools*

	£ (Real Terms)[2]
1975-76	720
1976-77	730
1977-78	700
1978-79	715
1979-80	705
1980-81	740
1981-82	790
1982-83	815
1983-84	875
1984-85	870
1985-86	905
1986-87	955

[1] Net institutional recurrent expenditure covers the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.
[2] The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1986-87 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

English Teaching (Kingman Report)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received the Kingman report on the teaching of English in schools; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I received the report before Easter and expect to publish it tomorrow.

A-level Examinations (Higginson Reports)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has now received the Higginson reports on A-levels; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I expect to receive the Higginson report shortly.

Residential Colleges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review the functions of long-term residential colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is currently reviewing the outcomes of various experimental projects conducted at some of the long-term residential colleges. The colleges were asked for their views on their future role recently and their ideas will be discussed with them later in the year.

Pen Tops

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the oral answer to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) of 15 March, *Official Report*, columns 982-23, what advice he has given to local education authorities in respect of detachable pen tops.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has now written to all local education authorities along the lines indicated in my previous answer. I am arranging for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in the light of the recent launch of a specially designed safety air flow cap for detachable pen tops, what criteria he plans to recommend to chief education officers over the use of such products.

Mr. Dunn: The Department's letter of 21 March to chief education officers, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, gives advice on various types of pen top and takes into account recent and imminent developments as reported to the Department.

Bracken Spores and Stomach Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on current research into a possible link between bracken spores and stomach cancer in humans.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that the expert advisory committee on carcinogenicity, which reports to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, will shortly advise on the possible hazards to human health from bracken in air, food and water. The need for further research in this area will be considered in the light of that advice.

Education Reform

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will issue guidance on the provisions he would expect to be contained in the planning and establishment of schemes of financial delegation for schools which local education authorities would be required to prepare under clauses 25 to 41 of the Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am today issuing draft guidance to all local education authorities and other interested parties on the action which local education authorities would be required to take under clauses 25 to 41 of the Education Reform Bill if it receives Royal Assent in its present form.

The principle of financial delegation to schools, the provisions for which are a central part of the Education Reform Bill, has been widely welcomed. The Bill affords only a broad framework. Within that, if the Bill receives Royal Assent in its present form, it will be for each local education authority to prepare its own scheme of financial delegation setting out their proposed arrangements for distributing resources between all their maintained county and voluntary schools, and for delegation to the governing bodies of all secondary schools and all primary schools with 200 or more pupils the responsibility for managing their budgets.

The draft guidance is being issued now to inform discussion of financial delegation to schools during the remaining stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament, to help local education authorities in their planning, and to give all concerned an early opportunity to comment. Comments are invited by 15 July 1988.

Copies of the draft guidance have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and in the Vote Office.

Students (Income and Expenditure)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the results will be made public of the comprehensive survey into students' income and expenditure referred to in the Government's response to the first report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, Session 1986-87.

Mr. Jackson: The report on the survey is being published by Research Services Limited today. A copy has been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Exercise Excalibur

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates Exercise Excalibur is to be held; how many and what types of aircraft will be participating; and what areas of the United Kingdom will be affected.

Mr. Freeman: Exercise Excalibur III will be held on 29 April 1988 and will involve 44 USAFE aircraft including RF-4s, F-4s, F-16s, F-15s, F-5s, F-111s and A-10s. The exercise will be centred on Spadeadam range, but parts of north Yorkshire and Cumbria are expected to see aircraft at low level during their approach to the range.

NATO

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent report from the 13 member state independent European programme group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation on armament development and procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The European defence industry study was commissioned by IEPG Defence Ministers with the aim of identifying ways in which the competitiveness of Europe's defence industries might be enhanced. It was carried out by a group of eminent individuals under the chairmanship of Mr. Vredeling of the Netherlands. The group recommended a range of measures, including increased collaboration in defence research and the development of a more open and competitive European market in defence equipment.

IEPG Defence Ministers welcomed the report at their meeting last june. In particular, they agreed to press ahead with the IEPG's work on generating more joint research projects; and they tasked their armament directors to make proposals for the framework of a scheme within which a more open defence equipment market might be developed, for their consideration at their next ministerial meeting in the autumn.

Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom has imported any uranium for non-nuclear explosive defence purposes from the United States of America in any year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The then Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed the House on 17 January 1985, at columns *183-84*, of the procurement of depleted uranium for the development programme of an anti-armour ammunition. Some of the material to which he referred was purchased from the United States as trial feed for prototype production. The House was informed on the same day of the Phalanx system deployed with the Royal Navy, which is purchased from the United States together with its depleted uranium alloy ammunition.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what chemical form any uranium imported from *(a)* Namibia and *(b)* the Republic of South Africa has been received in the United Kingdom for defence use.

Mr. Sainsbury: In line with the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 20 July 1987, at column *97*, it has never been the policy of any Government to disclose the sources of our defence stockpile of uranium.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any United Kingdom plutonium has been exported, without safeguards, to the United States of America since May 1979 under the Anglo-American mutual defence agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), on 19 November 1984, at column *25*, which quoted several earlier replies, including that given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 25 April 1984, at column *506*, which may now be updated to read, "during the past 17 years". I have nothing further to add.

Property Damage (County Donegal)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in each of the last three years there have been complaints from *(a)* the Government of the Irish Republic, *(b)* Donegal county council or Donegal county councillors, and *(c)* persons residing in County Donegal, regarding damage to property alleged to have been caused by explosives set off by the Army in County Londonderry; what was the extent of such alleged damage; what compensation has been claimed; and what sums have been involved.

Mr. Freeman: As a result of explosives tests carried out at Magilligan point, County Londonderry, between November 1985 and 1986, a total of 53 claims for alleged structural damage to property were received from residents of the Greencastle area of County Donegal. Of these, 30 were pursued by the claimants. After careful investigation, those claims were repudiated by my Department in February 1987. My Department has received no complaints from Donegal county council or Donegal county councillors. Information relating to these claims has been exchanged with the Irish Government on a number of occasions since 1985.

Low Flying

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties over the United Kingdom in each year since 1979 were accounted for by aircraft from RAF Germany.

Mr. Freeman: Central records of usage of the United Kingdom low-flying system have not in the past distinguished between RAF aircraft based in the United Kingdom and those based elsewhere, including the Federal Republic of Germany. The information requested is not therefore available.

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the land area of Scotland is included within the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Freeman: The whole of the land area of Scotland is included within the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Forward Air Control Exercise

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent local press and hon. Members will be informed about the Forward Air Control exercise to be held in the Elan valley, Powys, from 11 to 13 May.

Mr. Freeman: It is normal practice to provide hon. Members with advance notice of any major exercise that is likely to have a significant effect on low-flying activity in their constituencies. The Press Association, local papers and local TV and radio stations are similarly informed about major exercises. Notification is not, however, given for all small exercises, such as the Forward Air Control exercise referred to, although this exercise may be mentioned in the formal notification concerning the annual OSEX exercise, to which it relates.

Fast Jet Operational Training Programme

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which elements of the Royal Air Force fast jet operational training programme were considered by the 1985 Gibson report.

Mr. Freeman: The report considered the pattern, content and duration of Royal Air Force fast jet operational flying training following completion of advanced flying training.

US Military Personnel (Arrests)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has to the power under which United States military personnel claim to have acted in effecting arrests at *(a)* United States bases, *(b)* training areas in use by United States forces and *(c)* any other areas, over the last five years.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The powers of arrest of United States military personnel in the United Kingdom are the same as those of an ordinary British citizen.

Air Staff Requirement 1584

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the requirements set out in air staff requirement 1584.

Mr. Sainsbury: Air staff requirement 1584 concerns the provision of new sensors for the identification and location of airborne radars as part of the improved air defence ground environment.

Army Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether right hon. and hon. Members will be invited to attend the British Army equipment exhibition to be held in Aldershot from 27 June to 1 July.

Mr. Freeman: A number of right hon. and hon. Members have been invited to attend the British Army equipment exhibition on 28 June as the guests of the Ministry of Defence.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the number of National Health Service patients treated as *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients at Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich, during the last 12 months for which figures are available together with comparative figures for the preceding five years.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of NHS patients, including dependants, treated at the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich, in 1987 and the preceding four years are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Inpatients	4,788	5,693	6,500	6,070	6,042
Day Patients	220	833	991	781	1,287
Outpatients	4,725	4,787	5,953	4,977	4,767

Notes:

1. The out-patient numbers represent individual new cases and do not include follow up appointments.
2. The comparable figures for 1982 and the preceding years are not yet readily available.

Armilla Patrol

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the rôle of the Armilla patrol of United States plans to broaden the scope of its rôle in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The policy for the Armilla patrol is kept under constant review in the light of all relevant factors. Any change in the operating pattern of a friendly navy would, of course, be taken fully into account.

Exercise Elder Forest

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the results of the recent Exercise Elder Forest.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Elder Forest 1988 was the latest in a biennial series of exercises the purpose of which is to test procedures for the air defence of the United Kingdom. The exercise took place from 18 to 22 April. A full assessment of the lessons learned is in hand, but will take some time to complete. Initial indications are that the exercise was successful in meeting its aims.

United States Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation procedures are currently in force regarding military action by United States forces based in the United Kingdom; if he has received any requests from the United States Government for the use of bases in the United Kingdom for possible military action in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Churchill/Truman understanding of 1952 reaffirmed that the use of United States basis in the United Kingdom in an emergency would be a matter for joint decision by Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time. Appropriate arrangements exist to cover both conventional and nuclear United States forces, whether under national or NATO command. These arrangements are classified. It is not our usual practice to comment on any discussions between the United States and United Kingdom Governments about the details of operational plans.

360 Squadron RAF

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to privatise the electronic countermeasures training role currently carried out by No. 360 Squadron RAF.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to privatise the task of No. 360 squadron RAF.

The MoD will, however, in the normal way, continue to keep under review the most cost-effective way of meeting this requirement.

100 Squadron RAF

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to privatise the target facilities functions carried out by No. 100 Squadron RAF.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to privatise the task of No. 100 squadron RAF.

The MOD will, however, in the normal way, continue to keep under review the most cost-effective way of meetting this requirement.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his statement of 25 April, *Official Report,* columns 21-22, for what reasons Her Majesty's Government declared production offtake of the new European fighter aircraft was set at a figure of 250; and what are the comparable offtakes set out by the other participant nations

Mr. Sainsbury: Each of the partner nations declared its projected production offtake in 1985 on the basis of its perceived needs. These declared offtakes and the development workshares for which they formed the basis remain unchanged as follows:

	Number of aircraft	*Percentage*
United Kingdom	250	33
Federal Republic of Germany	250	33
Italy	165	21
Spain	100	13

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his statement of 25 April, *Official Report,* columns 21-22, whether the actual expenses incurred by the European fighter aircraft development programme will be made public; and whether the United Kingdom financial liability will relate only to the work contracted for by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details of United Kingdom expenditure on the development of the European fighter aircraft will be made available to Committees of the House in the normal way, but any consideration of wider publication would need to take account of our obligations to our international partners. Contracts will be let on behalf of the participating nations by NEFMA (the Eurofighter management agency) on the two prime contractors, Eurofighter Jagdflugzeug GmbH and Eurojet Turbo GmbH, at the request of the four participating nations. In the context of the agreements among the four nations, the United Kingdom will have a financial liability within the terms of the prime contracts for the United Kingdom's workshare. The United Kingdom will in addition have a financial liability to fund a 33 per cent. share of the international administrative costs of the programme.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a decision has yet been made on the organisation or body which will determine the sale price of the European fighter aircraft offered for sale abroad in the event of the project proceeding to production.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. It would be premature at this stage to reach a decision on the price of EFA for export. We are confident, however, that EFA will prove to be very attractive to potential customers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a decision has yet been made on the location of the headquarters of the Eurofighter consortium; what will be the legal structure of that organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The corporate headquarters of Eurofighter Jagdflugzeug GmbH has been established at Munich since 1986. It is there colocated with the international government management agency (NEFMA). Eurofighter is wholly owned by the partner aircraft companies (British Aerospace, Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm, Aeritalia, Construcciones Aeronauticas) of the four nations, and will be the prime contractor responsible for the whole weapon system including integration of the avionics and the engine system.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he proposes in his defence programme to accommodate the £1·7 billion development cost of the European fighter aircraft development within the planned expenditure totals published last autumn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: When the public expenditure totals for defence were set last autumn, the probable need was already recognised to provide for the development cost of EFA. Only a small proportion of the total development cost falls within the public expenditure planning period. We do not, therefore, propose to make changes to the defence programme for those years as a result of the decision which my right hon. Friend announced on 25 April. The period of highest expenditure on EFA is expected to be around the turn of the century, but the defence programme for those years is, of course, at only a preliminary planning stage and will be shaped reflecting the priority accorded to EFA.

Gulf War

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has reassessed the likelihood of the loss through *(a)* mines or *(b)* missiles of a major ship in the Gulf, in the light of the incident involving the USS Samuel Roberts.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the safety of British minesweepers in the light of recent military action in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The likely threat to Royal Navy ships serving in the Gulf area is kept under constant review in the light both of general circumstances and of particular incidents. Although there is, of course, always some risk inherent in the Armilla patrol's duties, the ships have self-defence equipment relevant to the range of threats in the region. No Royal Navy ship was involved in the recent military action between United States and Iranian forces in the Gulf and Armilla's non-provocative and de-escalatory operating pattern is designed to minimise the risk of conflict at any time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Pass Holders

Mr. Madden: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list by name all those persons currently employed by right hon. and hon. Members on a permanent or temporary basis, showing by which right hon. or hon. Member they are employed and indicating which persons possess passes entitling them to access to the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not possible to provide this information, since it is not the practice, on security grounds, to make public the names of individual Palace of Westminster photo-identity pass holders.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospital Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on below the line redundancy costs as a result of hospital domestic services privatisation.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on 31 March, at column *660*. No further information is held centrally.

Rampton Special Hospital

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the capital expenditure on Rampton special hospital for each year since 1980; and what is the planned future capital expenditure.

Mr. Newton: Major and minor capital expenditure combined was as follows:

Financial year	*£000*
1980-81	972
1981-82	350
1982-83	294
1983-84	935
1984-85	1,891
1985-86	378
1986-87	834
1987-88	1,250

Future major capital expenditure planned for the current financial year up to and including 1992-93 is £17·26 million. Provision for minor capital expenditure will be determined annually from within the resources available for the special hospitals service.

Teaching Hospitals

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to provide for an element of direct central funding of teaching hospitals.

Mr. Newton: The additional service costs associated with providing teaching facilities are already protected through the service increment for teaching (SIFT) which is distributed in relation to the numbers of medical students in each region.

SIFT along with other aspects of the resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula is currently under review. Any recommendations which may emerge will be carefully considered.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what courses are available for nurses and midwives to undertake further training to improve the scope and standard of their skills.

Mr. Newton: The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting has issued outline curricula for 106 post-basic clinical courses, designed to enhance the scope and standard of skills of nurses and midwives. These courses cover clinical nursing skills, work with particular client groups, or research. Most are available at more than one centre throughout the country.

The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the English national board for further information.

In addition, schemes are available through the NHS training authority to assist nurses and midwives who wish to obtain a first degree in a subject relevant to their work and career aspirations and for those who wish to train for general management in the NHS. There are also a variety of management development programmes to assist nurses in their careers.

Hospitals

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the recommended staffing levels by patient category in hospitals; and what are the current staffing levels listed by each health authority.

Mr. Newton: Staffing levels for particular patient categories are a matter for local decision. For current staff in post figures, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 31 March, at columns *665-69*.

Alarm Systems

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will investigate the cost-effectiveness of a national centrally funded scheme of meeting the charges necessary to upgrade domestic telephone sockets to enable elderly residents to have house alarm systems installed by local authorities where that provision would enable them to live in the community and not in institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. The supply of emergency alarms is a matter for local authorities, which would no doubt approach British Telecom in suitable circumstances.

Pathology

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Management Advisory Service report on pathology staffing will be published.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the Management Advisory Services' report on pathology staffing in England;

(2) when he expects publication of the Management Advisory Services' report on pathology staffing in England.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), and to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 28 March 1988, at column *336*.

Vibration White Finger

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average percentage payment to recipients of the vibration white finger prescribed industrial disease benefit.

Mr. Scott: Average payments for vibration white finger on claims made since 1 October 1986 have been at the 30 per cent. rate (currently £20·16 per week). Since that date disablement benefit has not generally been payable where disablement is assessed at less than 14 per cent.

Consultants

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) in which National Health Service regions consultants' contracts are held at regional and district level, respectively; and if he will list the districts which hold consultant contracts;

(2) how many National Health Service consultants' contracts are held at regional and district levels, respectively; and what criteria determine whether contracts are held by district health authorities.

Mr. Newton: With the exception of teaching districts, consultants' contracts in England are held by regional health authorities. The teaching districts are listed as follows:

Newcastle
Leeds Western
Leeds Eastern
Leicestershire
Nottingham
Sheffield
Cambridge
Parkside
Riverside
Hampstead
Bloomsbury
City and Hackney
Tower Hamlets
West Lambeth
Camberwell
Lewisham and North Southwark
Wandsworth
Southampton and South West Hampshire
Oxfordshire
Bristol and Weston
Central Birmingham
Liverpool
Central Manchester
South Manchester
Salford

Social Workers (Vetting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has in relation to the number of social workers and medical staff who have been vetted by police before they are employed in jobs where they work with children; and whether his Department keeps information as to the number of people refused employment and the reasons therefor.

Mr. Newton: This information is not collected by the Department. Such information as is available is collected by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Benefits (Advertising)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department is spending on *(a)* advertising as a whole and *(b)* television advertising to publicise the changes in the social security benefit system; and if he will give a breakdown on the spending in relation to each main such change.

Mr. Portillo: A breakdown of the costs incurred so far on advertising is as follows:

	Spent July 1986-May 1988	
	(a) *Total* £	*(b)* *Television* £
General reform advertising	270,650	—
Pensions	205,800	64,000
Maternity benefits	344,600	—
Housing benefits	55,400	—
Family credit	322,100	322,100
Income support	126,300	—
Widows' benefits	49,400	—
Funeral benefits	59,100	—

In 1988-89 we plan to spend a further £4 million, mainly on pensions and family credit advertising. Approximately half of this will be spent on television.

Free Milk

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what change he expects there to be in the numbers of families eligible for free milk on the implementation of clause 11 of the Social Security Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: At the latest date for which information is available (February 1986) around 786,000 families were entitled to free welfare milk because they were receiving supplementary benefit or family income supplement, or were claiming under the low-income scheme. Following the changes introduced earlier this month by regulations made under the Social Security Act 1988, families receiving income support (about 633,000 on the basis of the numbers previously receiving supplemenary benefit) will still be entitled to free welfare milk. In family credit, provision is made in cash instead, by including an additional amount of £2·55 in the child credit rates for each child. The low-income scheme has been abolished. On the basis of the estimates in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" (October 1987) over 100,000 more children under five will receive the cash addition in family credit than were previously entitled to free welfare milk through receipt of family income supplement or under the low-income scheme.

Eye Tests (Pontefract)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Pontefract area health authority had eye tests in the last year for which figures are available; and what estimate he can make of how many would not have received free tests if his Department's new regulations had applied at the time.

Mr. Newton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to eye tests carried out under the general ophthalmic services. These are the responsibility of the family practitioner committee and it is not possible to give information for particular health authority areas. However, the figures for the Wakefield FPC, which includes the area covered by the Pontefract district health authority, were 68,449 for the year ended 31 December 1987. The provisions of the Health and Medicines Bill would confine NHS eye tests to children under 16, full time students under 19, the registered blind and partially sighted, people on low incomes and those with diabetes or glaucoma who are referred by the doctor managing their condition. It is estimated these groups account for a little over one third of eye tests.

Listeria Monocytogenes

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Yorkshire regional health authority will be represented at the international conference on the human pathogen listeria monocytogenes in Hungary in August;

(2) by whom his Department was represented at the international conference on 1 March at Leatherhead on the human pathogen listeria monocytogenes.

Mrs. Currie: The Department was represented by an environmental health officer at the conference "Listeria and its Implications for Food Safety" held on March 1 at the Leatherhead Food Research Association. There are no plans at present for the Department to be represented at the international conference to be held in Pesc, Hungary from 22 to 26 August 1988. Yorkshire regional health authority representation is a matter for that authority to decide. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the RHA chairman, Mr. Bryan Askew, for details.

Brook Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to complete his consideration of the proposal to transfer the neuro-sciences unit from the Brook hospital, Woolwich; and if he is yet able to indicate when he plans to visit the hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Either my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health will visit the Brook hospital and the proposed site of the new centre at the Maudsley hospital, before a final decision is made. It is hoped to make this visit within the next two months.

Cook-chill System

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what scientific evaluation of the cook-chill system has been carried out by his Department or any other relevant organisation;

(2) if he will conduct a full inquiry into the cost and safety aspects of the cook-chill system.

Mrs. Currie: Cook-chill is a long established method of preparing food in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. As with any technically sophisticated system, safety rests on the strict application of procedures and principles developed over time. In the United Kingdom, these are described in the Department's "Guidelines on pre-cooked chilled foods" published in 1980, which have been reviewed and updated by an expert working group. The new edition will be published shortly. The review included consideration of scientific data from both long-established

and more recently established cook-chill units and took account of relevant published scientific papers. The guidelines will be kept under review.

Decisions to introduce cook-chill are taken by commercial or institutional managers in the light of local catering needs. The design of each system, including its cost effectiveness, must relate to those needs.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the provisions relating to food hygiene circulated in a letter in January from Mr. David Thompson, head of catering, to all regional and district health authority general managers requiring that local environental health officers, control of infection officers, medical officers of environmental health and local medical microbiologists or public health laboratories are consulted before the introduction of cook-chill catering systems have been met by health authorities in the Yorkshire region; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities determine their own catering strategies and pattern of delivery within the framework of broad guidelines and management principles issued centrally. Information is not routinely collected on the manner in which health authorities use this guidance and the hon. Member should consult the chairman of Yorkshire regional health authority on the practices adopted in that region.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the £4 billion increase in real terms in social security expenditure over the period 1978-79 to 1987-88 was accounted for by increases or offsetting decreases in real terms in the average amounts of benefit paid, for each of the benefits listed in table 15.1 of Cm. 288-II; and what was the year-on-year increase.

Mr. Scott: The estimated increase in real terms in social security expenditure over the period 1978-79 to 1987-88 is £13 billion. An analysis of the £4 billion increase over that period caused by increases in the average amounts of benefits paid cannot be provided in precisely the form requested, but the available information is set out in the table. Further analysis showing year-on-year increases could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Analysis of real changes in average amount of benefit paid[1] Great Britain

	£ million
Retirement Pension	1,330
Christmas Bonus	(120)
Widow's Benefit	50
Unemployment Benefit	(360)
Sickness Benefit	(60)
Invalidity Benefit	160
Death Grant	(30)
Industrial Disablement Benefit	20
Maternity Allowance	(20)
War Pension	130
Attendance Allowance	30
Invalid Care Allowance	20
NCIP/SDA	60
Mobility Allowance	100
Supplementary Benefit & Certificated Housing Benefit[2,3]	840
Standard Housing Benefit	420
Child Benefit[4]	1,380
One Parent Benefit	60
Family Income Supplement	50
Maternity Grant	(30)

[1] Benefits where the change has an effect of less than £10 million have been excluded. Figures in brackets ( ) refer to decreases.

[2] Housing benefit is rent rebate and rent allowance. Rate rebates are excluded as they are not classified as public expenditure.

[3] Certificated housing benefit has been added to supplementary benefit to ensure a consistent basis for the comparison. The supplementary benefit figure for 1978-79 included the housing costs of supplementary benefit recipients.

[4] The increase is based on an analysis of public expenditure only and takes no account of tax allowance available in 1978-79.

Nurses

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures the Government are taking to ensure that there are adequate staff in specialties, including geriatrics and psychogeriatrics, where pay increases will be between 4 and 6 per cent.

Mr. Newton: The Government share the view of the Nurses' Pay Review Body that the new clinical structure offers an outstanding opportunity to improve the attractions of nursing as a career and that it will play an important part in improving recruitment and retention. Nurses in geriatric and psychogeriatrics stand to benefit from the new structure and from this year's average pay award of 15·3 per cent. and many working in these specialties will receive pay increases significantly in excess of 6 per cent.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to local authorities with regard to the implementation of the Data Protection Act within local authority social services departments.

Mrs. Currie: In September 1987 we issued to all local authorities circular LAC(87)10, a copy of which is in the Library. This gave guidance on the limitations to an individual's right of access to personal information laid down in the social work order made under the Act. Guidance on the rights of children and parents under the Act is in preparation. Guidance generally on the operation of the Act has been issued by the Data Protection Registrar.

Juvenile Offenders (Supervision)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take following the publication of his Department's report on the practice of supervision of juvenile offenders.

Mrs. Currie: This report was the result of a joint inspection by Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation and the inspectorate of social services on practice and supervision of juvenile offenders in two non-metropolitan counties in England. The inspection was designed to obtain information about the effectiveness of the supervision order; to assist those agencies involved in the inspection of the future development of their services; and to provide material to assist other social services departments and probation services in their work.

The report was drawn to the attention of directors of social services by the chief inspector of the social services

inspectorate on 16 December 1987. In doing so he highlighted a number of matters of concern both in the treatment of young offenders and in maintaining the confidence of courts in making supervision orders to reduce the numbers sentenced to custody, and drew attention to the recommendations related to these points included in the report. Copies of the report were sent also to the relevant local authority and professional associations.

The social services inspectorate continues to follow-up the implications of the inspection report in discussions with the two local authorities who participated in the study. The Department will continue to draw on the conclusions and recommendations in the report in considering future policy on supervision orders for juvenile offenders.

Child Benefit

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to maintain the level of child benefit payments in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 12 April, at column *86*.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to promote the publication in local newspapers of information on individual consultants' waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: As part of the waiting list initiative we are encouraging district health authorities to make information about in and out-patient waiting times more widely available to general practitioners and the general public. It is for each health authority to decide how this may best be achieved.

Income Support

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes changes to the income support scheme in the light of his announcement of 27 April.

Mr. Scott: In addition to the more flexible approach to the treatment of property as capital which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced yesterday, we propose making three other small changes to the rules governing the income related benefits.

We will provide transitional protection for disabled people, lone parents and pensioners who were receiving supplementary benefit but who are not entitled to income support because of changes in the rules relating to full-time work.

Secondly, we will also provide that certain young people in full-time education who lost their benefit on 11 April because they were over 19 years old will get protection. Both these groups of people will be able to look for this special help to the new central unit, announced yesterday.

Thirdly, we intend to give additional protection to certain small groups who were temporarily away from home during the week before 11 April. We have in mind, for example, people who were temporarily in hospital or respite care and those who were abroad getting medical treatment. This extra help will be provided through the income support scheme.

These additional minor changes will be introduced as soon as practicable and will target help to particularly vulnerable groups. Procedures for claiming these new forms of transitional protection will be announced shortly.

Chiropody

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the chiropody service;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of the chiropody profession;

(3) if he will make a statement on the future of the chiropody profession;

(4) when he intends to reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East on the future of chiropody services in January and Februrary; and if he will give the reasons for the delay.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 22 April 1988, c. 596]:* The Cartwright report, "More Trouble with Feet", pointed to the need to improve chiropody services for the elderly. We have concluded that a number of recommendations in the report should be implemented and we propose discussing with the chiropody profession and other interested bodies how this might be achieved.

These discussions are likely to cover the wider use of foot care assistants, encouraging more contractual and sessional arrangements with private chiropodists, and the place which chiropodists might play in primary care teams in the future, as suggested in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health".

Michael Forsyth Ltd.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all contacts by *(a)* Ministers in his Department and *(b)* civil servants in his Department with representatives of Michael Forsyth Ltd; Michael Forsyth Associates and subsidiaries thereof, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply, 21 April 1988, c. 545-46]:* I have today attended the Pensions Journalist of the Year lunch arranged by Michael Forsyth Limited, acting on behalf of the Alexander Consultants Group.

Mental Handicap Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to publish advice to local services on issues of common concern for people with mental handicaps, relating to the integration of people with additional needs such as challenging behaviour and people with (i) mental handicaps and (ii) mental illness.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 March 1988]:* The Department's paper[1] "Mental Handicap: policies and priorities" draws attention to the need to identify mentally handicapped people with special needs and to plan services to meet them. "Helping Mentally Handicapped People with Special Problems", the report of a departmental study team, was published in 1984[2]. It covered special needs such as multiple and sensory handicaps and behaviour

disturbance in severely mentally handicapped people. In recognition of the special needs of mentally handicapped people who are also mentally ill or behaviourally disturbed, a departmental team has undertaken a programme of visits and discussions with people who are currently providing or planning services to respond to the needs of these individuals. The Department is now considering how best to share information about services and facilities. We are also sponsoring a number of relevant research studies which it is hoped will help health and local authorities to plan services.

[1] Paragraph 32 of Annex 2 of the Government's response to the Second Report from the Social Services Committee on Community Care. (Cmnd. 9674).

[2] DHSS.

Labour Statistics (Castleford)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many unemployed persons over the age of 50 years and out of work for more than one year, broken down by sex, there are in the Castleford travel-to-work area.[1]

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 14 January 1988 there were 1,280 male and 186 female unemployed claimants aged over 50 years who had been unemployed for one year or more in the Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Chickens

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions in respect of unnecessary pain or distress caused to broiler and battery chickens in each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of prosecutions undertaken and convictions obtained by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of causing unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to poultry in England within the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
1987	1	1
1986	1	1
1985	Nil	Nil
1984	Nil	Nil
1983	1	1

Pigs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the marketing of pigs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government support the action being taken by the Meat and Livestock Commission and Food From Britain to improve the marketing of British meat, including pigmeat. Assistance is also available for the improvement of pig processing facilities under EC regulations 355/77.

Cows

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to increase the premium payable on suckler cows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We increased the suckler cow premium by £8·66 to £33·40 for the 1987-88 scheme year. The period for applications under the 1988-89 scheme cannot begin before 15 June and the arrangements to apply in that year will be announced nearer the time.

Beef Variable Premium

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the retention of the beef variable premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received representations from producers which point to the value of the beef variable premium scheme. Those involved in the meat trade, particularly those exporting beef, have pointed to the disadvantages which the BVPS has for them because of the clawback on exports. The retention of the BVPS until the end of this year was an important feature of the settlement in December 1986. We shall be negotiating later this year on the arrangements for 1989.

Bovine Spongiform

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement regarding the extent of bovine spongiform throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As at 22 April, 430 cases of BSE had been confirmed on 359 farms in Great Britain.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department will provide more information to farmers and veterinarians about the disease bovine spongiform.

Mr. Donald Thompson: All the known facts about bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) have been made available to the veterinary profession, the farming industry and the specialist media.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines his Department intends to give to farmers and veterinarians on the problem of bovine spongiform.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Advice, based on the current state of knowledge about the disease, is being provided, particularly through the Ministry's veterinary investigaton centres. There have also been a number of Ministry scientific presentations, publications and general articles on the subject including one, giving the latest advice, which will appear in this week's *Veterinary Record.*

Research and Development

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce a decision on the future of research and development in agriculture, fisheries and food in the light of the finalisation of the Barnes review.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 25 April at column *43*.

Foodstuffs (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to the answer of 13 April, *Official Report*, column *155*, he will list *(a)* the maximum permitted levels of radioactive caesium in foodstuffs for Malaysia and the Philippines operated after April 1986, *(b)* how many consignments of milk powder were rejected (i) from the European Community and (ii) from the United Kingdom, *(c)* the volume or weight of these rejected consignments and *(d)* what happened to each rejected consignment.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* I understand that the maximum permitted radiocaesium levels in feedstuffs operated by Malaysia and the Philippines after April 1986 are as follows:

Malaysia

	CS-127	*CS-134*	*Bq/kg (CS-137+CS-134)*
(from 1 October 1986)			
Milk and Milk Products and Mineral Water	120	60	180
Fruit and Vegetables—Fresh and Processed	216	108	324
Meat, Meat Products, Fish and other Sea Food—Fresh and Processed	360	180	540
Cereals Including Cornflour and Barley	168	84	252

Philippines

	Bq/kg CS-137+CS-134
From 1 July 1986	
Powdered whole or skimmed milk	22·2
Processed liquid milk	14·8
Cheese	33·3
Wheat, barley	5·6
Rice	7·5
Seafood	27·8
Meat except lamb	6·0
Lamb	450·0
Apples	7·5
From 1 October 1986	
Milk products	
Liquid milk	15·0
Milk powder (full cream/non fat)	22·0
Whey powder	22·0
Anhydrous milkfat/butterfat	22·0
Cream	22·0
Cheese/curd	33·0
Butter/raw butter	22·0
Food for infants/young children	22·0
Fruit products	
Fruit purees/concentrates	8·0
Fruits in syrup/brine	8·0
Jams/jellies/marmalades	8·0
Other preserved fruits (raisins, dates, glazed fruits etc.)	8·0
Vegetable products	
Purees/concentrates/flakes	22·0
Pickled/salted/dried/powdered	22·0
Vegetable starches	22·0
Protein hydrolysates	22·0
Meat products	
Meat pastes/spreads/extract	6·0
Corned beef/luncheon meat	6·0
Ham/pork shoulders	6·0
Sausages	6·0
Cereal products	
Oatmeal	6·0
Corn flakes/meal	6·0
Malt extract	6·0
Fish/marine products	28·0
Miscellaneous	
Cocoa powder/chocolate drink	22·0
Tonic food drink	22·0
Chocolate bars/chocolate candies	22·0
Roasted coffee (ground)	22·0
Dextrose/glucose/honey	2·0

I do not have the details requested of the consignments of milk powder rejected by these countries except in the case of three consignments from the United Kingdom. The information I have on these is as follows:

Ultimate destination	*Weight (tonnes)*
Netherlands for use in animal feed	390·0/6·5
Republic of Ireland (from which this consignment originated)	15·0

I repeat the statement I made in replying to the previous question on this subject on 13 April at column *155*. I am fully satisfied that these feedstuffs posed no risk to public health.

NATIONAL FINANCE

War Loan

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the register of those holding 3½ per cent. war loan is computerised.

Mr. Lilley: The 3½ per cent. war loan is held on four registers; at the Bank of England, the Bank of Ireland in Belfast and Dublin, and on the national savings stock register. All of these registers are now held on computer, but the computerised registers do not show changes in ownership of war loan prior to computerisation.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates to be the average percentage effect of the rise from 140 to 187 in the sterling-dollar exchange rate, on the income received for manufactured goods exported from Britain to the United States of America in the last quarter of 1987 and the first quarter of 1988.

Mr. Major: The effect of exchange rate changes on the value of exports depends on a number of factors and is difficult to separate from other determinants of trade performance. In the three months to February 1988—the latest period for which published figures are available—the value of total exports of goods to the United States was 2½ per cent. higher than in the previous three months.

Consumer Expenditure

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of consumer expenditure in each of the last five years on *(a)* books, *(b)* records and audio tapes, *(c)* video tapes, *(d)* cinema, *(e)* theatre, *(f)* live arts, *(g)* newspapers and periodicals, *(h)* restaurants, *(i)* alcoholic drinks, *(j)* sport and *(k)* leisure.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Not all the categories of expenditure mentioned in the question are separately distinguished in the consumers' expenditure estimates compiled and published by the Central Statistical Office. The table gives figures of consumers' expenditure as closely as possible with the categories requested. A detailed breakdown of consumers' expenditure is published annually in the United Kingdom National Accounts (the CSO Blue Book). An even finer level of breakdown is shown in an analysis available on subscription from the Central Statistical Office. This is the source of the figures given in this answer and I am arranging to have the latest version of the analysis placed in the House of Commons Library.

Consumers' expenditure estimates—Current prices *£ million*

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Books	619	665	706	806	911
Records etc.[1]	691	790	895	1,062	1,239
Cinema	124	104	132	142	150
Other admissions[2]	1,635	1,819	2,065	2,401	2,658
Newspapers and magazines	1,967	2,095	2,334	2,431	2,594
Catering (meals and accommodation)[3]	10,439	12,015	13,306	15,297	17,571
Alcoholic drink	13,370	14,430	15,783	16,474	17,338
Betting and gaming	1,841	1,969	2,114	2,250	2,458
Social etc. subscriptions[4]	150	163	159	177	174
Leisure goods except records etc. and on pets[5]	2,566	2,796	3,109	3,451	3,799
TV licences, hire and repairs	2,027	2,108	2,307	2,527	2,640

[1] Also includes audio and video tapes.
[2] Has broadly similar coverage to theatres, live arts and spectator sports.
[3] Besides all meals purchased and consumed away from the home, includes hotel and residential accommodation.
[4] Includes subscriptions to sports clubs.
[5] Includes sports goods, toys, camping equipment, plants and seeds, photographic films and processing.

CIVIL SERVICE

Photocopying Machines

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many photocopying machines there are within the Civil Service; and how many are fitted with a user code requirement.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

Civil Service Departments are no longer required to obtain all their photocopiers through Her Majesty's Stationery Office, but HMSO estimates that there are about 25,000 photocopiers in the Civil Service, of which around 1,000 are fitted with user code devices.

Tea Ladies

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many tea ladies are employed in the Civil Service; and what steps are being taken to provide refreshment machines.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

The Civil Service does not employ tea ladies. Refreshment machines are provided where these are cost-effective and where funds permit.

THE ARTS

Ethnic Minority Arts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much the Arts Council has spent on *(a)* Afro-Caribbean and Asian arts and *(b)* other ethnic minorities in each financial year since its ethnic minority action plan was launched; and what percentage of its total budget this represents in each year.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council's spending on ethnic minority arts was £960,166 in 1986-87 and £1,024,178 in 1987-88.

This figure covers only the council's direct expenditure in England and does not include expenditure by the

regional arts associations, Scottish and Welsh Arts Council programmes, activities promoted by client organisations of the Arts Council and visiting arts expenditure, in respect of which an ethnic breakdown is not held centrally.

A report on ethnic minority arts will be published by the council later this year.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list in the *Official Report* all the individuals and organisations which benefited from the Arts Council's expenditure on *(a)* Afro-Caribbean Arts and *(b)* other ethnic minorities, and the sums by which they benefited in the years 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Luce: The information requested as it relates to the Arts Council's direct expenditure in England, is as follows:

Arts Council expenditure on ethnic minority arts 1986-87 to 1987-88

	£
Music	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Sounds of Africa	5,500
WOMAD	1,500
Dade Krama	3,300
Wilf Walker Entertainments	6,000
National Steel Band Festival	7,000
	23,300
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Black Music Fair	15,000
National Steel Band Festival	20,000
Sunsplash	5,000
Dade Krama	7,000
Wilf Walker Entertainments	10,000
L & H Promotions	2,500
Black Music Archives	2,500
Sunsplash	3,500
Arts Worldwide (African Tour)	2,500
Triple Earth	3,500
Caribbean Year	2,500
Training awards	10,000
	84,000
1986-87—Asian	
Ceylon Bloomsbury	1,500
Sanskritik Festival	42,500
UK University Circuit	900
Alpana Sengupta	3,800
Arts Worldwide	12,000
	60,700
1987-88—Asian	
Sanskritik Festival	41,200
Arts Worldwide	15,000
Bhaven	900
One World	6,850
East West Musical Encounter	2,000
Arts Worldwide	5,360
Arts Worldwide	4,000
Recordings	10,000
	85,310
Film	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Aubrey Williams	36,000
H. Wilson	1,000
Carol Enahoro	614
Circles	1,500
	39,114
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Association for Curriculum Development	3,000
Carol Enahoro	1,500
Keith Piper	650
Patricia Diaz and M. McIntosh	4,500
	9,650
1986-87—Asian	
No awards were made in this financial year	
1987-88—Asian	
Parminder Vir and Julian Henriques	40,000
Pratiba Parmar	3,000
Alia Syed	500
	43,500
Literature	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Grace Nichols	5,000
1986-87—Asian	
Mahmood Jamal	5,000
Balraj Khanna	5,000
	10,000
Combined arts	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Carnival and Arts Committee	98,000
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Carnival and Arts Committee	100,000
Art	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Sonia Boyce	3,000
Aubrey Williams	3,500
Demax: Eddie Chambers	5,760
Artists Maps	416
Daylight Club	463
Sculpture in the City	320
	13,459
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Artangel Trust	3,000
Rochdale Gallery	2,700
Chisenhale	4,758
Paddington Printshop	7,000
Camden Press	3,960
Veronica Ryan	10,000
	31,418
1986-87—Asian	
Saleem Arif	2,000
Women Sculptors	520
	2,520
1987-88—Asian	
Third Text	4,000
Bazaar	10,000
Fires Publishing	1,600
	15,600
Photography	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Armet Francis	5,000

	£
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Black Women & Photography	5,000
Association of Black Photographers	8,000
	13,000
Touring—Contemporary Music Network	
1986-87—Asian	
Sumul Nori	28,827
1987-88—Asian	
Peshkar	50,550
Dance	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Black Dance Development Trust	14,000
Phoenix	65,000
Adinkra	15,000
Adzido	12,500
Delado	7,500
Irie	3,000
Kokuma	7,500
	125,000
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Kokuma	24,700
Adzido	17,500
Beach Danel Development Trust	16,500
IDJ	5,000
Delado	12,500
Irie	5,000
	81,200
1986-87—Asian	
Suraya Hilal	2,500
Shobana Jeyasingh	8,000
Alpana Sengupta	8,500
Academy of Indian Dance	6,000
Natya Pidam	4,000
Nahid Siddiqui	2,000
	31,000
1987-88—Asian	
Nahid Siddiqui	3,500
Pratap Pawar	5,000
Shobana Jeyasingh	5,000
Pushkala Gopal and Unnikrishnan	6,000
Natya Padam	1,000
A Fiercer Kind of Being	4,000
	24,500
Drama	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Black Theatre Co-op	95,300
Temba	126,750
Black Theatre Workshop	14,000
Bow Gamelan Ensemble	4,744
Carib Theatre	12,000
Double Edge	20,000
L'Ouverture Theatre Trust	18,990
Talawa	33,000
Theatre of Black Women	26,200
Umoja	14,730
	365,714
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Black Theatre Co-op	104,500
Temba	100,000
Theatre of Black Women	10,000
Talawa	31,700
Gbakanda Afrikan Tiata	4,100
Staunch	26,700
	277,000
1986-87—Asian	
British Asian Theatre	8,000
Eastern Actors Studio	2,530
Tara Arts	89,301
	99,831
1987-88—Asian	
British Asian Theatre	30,000
Eastern Actors' Studio	8,000
Tara Arts	105,500
	143,500
Theatre Writing Schemes	
1986-87—Afro-Caribbean	
Focof Novo Ltd.	2,400
L'Ouverture Theatre Trust	800
Roots Theatre Company	951
Sickle Cell Clinic	750
Temba	4,800
	9,701
1987-88—Afro-Caribbean	
Action Transport	1,500
Caesar, Burt	2,000
Carib Theatre Co.	1,200
Good Co.	900
Ikoli, Tunde	2,400
Oval Womens Writers W/Shop	1,200
ReSisters Theatre Co.	950
Royal Court	2,400
Second Wave	600
Strange Fruit Theatre Co.	1,500
Worcester Arts W/Shop	500
	15,150
1986-87—Asian	
Asian Cooperative Theatre	1,000
1987-88—Asian	
Alrawi, Karim	2,400
Dance Umbrella	500
Raif, Ayshe	2,400
Yorkshire Womens Theatre Co.	500
	5,800
Planning	
1986-87	
Minorities Arts Advisory Service	30,000
Training Bursaries	12,000
	42,000
1987-88	
Minorities Arts Advisory Service	44,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electricity Generation

3. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the future generation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

23. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the future generation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

29. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the future generation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The results of an investment appraisal of the proposals for the next phase of generating capacity submitted by Northern Ireland Electricity and the Antrim Power Company Limited are currently being considered. Decisions will be taken as soon as possible.

Health and Social Services

8. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current level of funding for health and social services in the Province.

Mr. Needham: Total funding for the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland in 1988-89 will amount to £873 million—equivalent to over £557 per head of the population.

Social Security

11. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the effects of the social security changes in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

28. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the effects of the social security changes in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

32. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the effects of the social security changes in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Representations concerning the effects have been made by some district councils, some voluntary bodies and some Members of this House. The effects will generally be the same as in Great Britain and the additional transitional protection and other helpful measures announced yesterday by my right hon. Friend will apply in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Integrated Education

12. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding assistance other than capital moneys, his Department intends to target towards integrated maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government's present proposal to facilitate the establishment of grant-maintained integrated schools includes 100 per cent. funding direct from the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. Recurrent grants would include special purpose grants to take account of special needs arising in particular circumstances.

Economic Activity (West Belfast)

13. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals to promote economic activity in west Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

21. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals to promote economic activity in west Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals to promote economic activity in west Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: We are most anxious to see an improvement in economic activity in west Belfast, and we are considering urgently what additional practical steps we might take to promote it. Success, however, will not be achieved by the efforts of Government alone; the private and voluntary sectors must have a major role. The biggest single boost to the prospects of the area would come from the renunciation of violence which is a major obstacle to achieving better prospects for all who live there.

Security

14. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on security in Northern Ireland.

15. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation in Northern Ireland.

24. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

26. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security position.

31. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

33. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

Health Service

16. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about his plans for the Health Service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend's long-term strategy for the health and personal social services remains as set out in the regional strategy which was published in August 1987.

I will shortly be meeting the chairman of each of the four health and social services boards at accountability reviews at which one of my aims will be to consider and agree with them on detailed plans for 1988-89.

25. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to meet the chairmen of the Province's health and social services boards to discuss the level of health provision in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I will shortly be meeting each board chairman at the annual accountability review. These

meetings will concentrate largely on the revised operational plans for 1988-89 submitted by the boards and I shall agree with each chairman plans and objectives for the coming year. These will aim to continue progress with the regional strategy within the level of resources now made available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to meet the chairmen of the Province's area health and social services boards to discuss the level of health provision in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I will shortly be meeting the chairman of each board at the annual round of accountability reviews.

Disabled Persons

17. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received relating to legislation concerning disabled persons in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The hon. Member, two other hon. Members, and the Northern Ireland Council on Disability, have made representations regarding the application to Northern Ireland of the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 affecting disabled persons.

Regional Council

18. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to set up a regional council in Northern Ireland, with widely developed powers over local matters.

Mr. Tom King: No, but in the present discussions I am prepared to listen to all constructive proposals that can command a broad measure of support and could genuinely provide a greater degree of involvement and responsibility for people in Northern Ireland.

House Building

19. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to discuss the level of house building; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to discuss the level of house building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Secretary of State and I met the chairman and members of the board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on 16 March 1988. We discussed the planned level of funding for the housing programme and the associated levels of physical activity, including new housebuilding.

Sentences (Remission)

20. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the policy of granting remission of sentences.

Mr. Stanley: In accordance with rule 26 of the Prison Rules (Northern Ireland) 1982, all prisoners serving fixed-term sentences of more than five days are awarded remission of 50 per cent. of their sentences. Periods of remission can be lost for offences against prison discipline, up to a maximum of 180 days for each offence. Those serving sentences of more than one year who are released with remission may, if convicted of a further imprisonable offence during the period until their sentence would (but for remission) have expired, be obliged by a court to serve the remainder of that period either concurrently or consecutively with their further sentence. This power is available only in Northern Ireland and not in the rest of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland does not, however have any parole system.

Catholic Hierarchy (Meetings)

22. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I have no meeting immediately planned, but I and my ministerial colleagues maintain regular contact with a range of Church and community leaders. I last met Cardinal O'Fiaich, together with other Church leaders, on 21 March.

Political Parties (Talks)

27. **Mr Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has held recently with the political parties in Northern Ireland on constitutional proposals for the Province.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison).

Equal Opportunities

30. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received any representations from the United States of America concerning the Government's proposals to promote equality of opportunity in employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend received one written submission from an organisation in the United States of America, in response to the Government's consultative paper on equality of opportunity. American public representatives and business men have also expressed views on equality of opportunity directly to the Secretary of State and to ministerial colleagues. A White Paper on the Goverment's new proposals on fair employment is now being prepared with a view to publication in late spring.

38. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will ask the Fair Employment Agency to advise him with regard to an affirmative action programme for his Department to rectify the imbalances in employment opportunities in that office as highlighted by the reports of the equal opportunities unit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The equal opportunities unit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service is already in touch with both the Fair Employment Agency and the Equal Opportunities Commission over the development of its monitoring role. The unit's method of operation and its future work programme were set out in reports published in July 1986 and December 1987.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received any representations from the United States of America concerning the Government's proposals to promote equality of opportunity in employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend received one written submission from an organisation in the United States of America, in response to the Government's consultative paper on equality of opportunity and a number of American public representatives and business men have also expressed views directly to my right hon. Friend and to ministerial colleagues.

Aerosols

34. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there are any plans to ban the use of aerosols in his Department's buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: There are no proposals to ban the use of aerosols in my Department's buildings.

Unlawful Killings

35. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the trend of unlawful killings in Northern Ireland both connected and unconnected with the security situation; and what was the trend in the period before the death penalty was removed in the Province.

Mr. Stanley: In line with legislation in Great Britain the death sentence was removed from the statute books in Northern Ireland on 6 August 1966 in respect of ordinary crime. However, it was retained in the Province

"for the murder of a policeman or person in the Service of the Crown acting in the course of any duty involving the enforcement of the law"

until 8 August 1973.

Only convictions for murder and not unlawful killing (manslaughter) could have resulted in the death penalty being imposed. The following table therefore shows the numbers of all murders committed in Northern Ireland during the period 1960 to 1987 (connected and unconnected with the security situation).

Total murders in Northern Ireland 1960-1987

	Numbers
1960	9
1961	5
1962	2
1963	—
1964	1
1965	1
1966	3
1967	5
1968	5
1969	5
1970	14
1971	123
1972	376
1973	200
1974	205
1975	238
1976	280
1977	116
1978	82
1979	128
1980	85
1981	95
1982	99
1983	86
1984	63
1985	59
1986	85
1987	100

Constitutional Reform

37. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about progress towards creating a form of democratic administration in the Province.

Mr. Tom King: The Government believe that elected representatives should be more fully involved in decision-making. I have therefore been seeking to bring about a constructive dialogue between the constitutional political parties about the future government of Northern Ireland. These efforts are continuing.

Rating Reform

39. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the answer of 10 December 1987, *Official Report*, column *566*, for how long he intends to monitor the operation of the community charge in Great Britain before reaching conclusions about its applicability to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot be specific about the duration of the monitoring process. It depends upon what emerges from the process and its evaluation in the light of local circumstances in Northern Ireland.

Economic Prospects

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet trades union representatives in Northern Ireland to discuss economic prospects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 27 April 1988]:* My right hon. Friend and I have no outstanding arrangements to meet trades union representatives, though we have met them on a number of occasions in the past to discuss economic prospects and other issues. We value these meetings.

Fourth College, Belfast

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current position regarding the provision of a fourth college in Belfast; and if a suitable site has yet been identified in a non-sectarian part of the city.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* The provision of further education facilities in Belfast is a matter for the Belfast education and library board. I understand that a working party of the board is presently examining further education provision in Belfast but no conclusions have yet been reached.

Consultants (Patient Referral)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the length of time between a patient being referred to a consultant for

an appointment by general practitioners and the patient actually seeing a consultant; and if he will publish this information for each area board and by specialty for the last five years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* This information is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish out-patient waiting lists for the last five years for each area board by specialty broken down by length of time on the waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 April 1988

ENVIRONMENT

East London (Housing)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what type of housing is envisaged for the five areas of new housing in east London announced on 20 April; how many will be for sale and how many for rent; under whose auspices the development will take place; what total amount of expenditure is envisaged; who will be responsible for funding; and what is the anticipated time scale from commissioning of consultants' reports and the commencement of the first construction.

Mr. Waldegrave: A mix of housing in the five areas is envisaged. It is too early to comment on the nature of that mix, which will depend on planning and other considerations. Similarly it is premature to comment on the other matters raised by the hon. Member as these will be amongst the topics covered by the appointed consultant.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations took place between his Department and the London boroughs involved before he made his announcement on the consultancy studies of the prospects for new housing on five sites in east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No special consultations took place between the Department and the London boroughs involved. The Department keeps in general contact with all London boroughs.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the leader of Newham council was notified of his announcement of consultancy studies of the prospect for new housing in five areas in east London; and when the original announcement was made.

Mr. Waldegrave: I wrote to the leader of Newham council on 21 April, the day following my announcement.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *825*, he will involve the London boroughs concerned with the work to be undertaken by the consultants commissioned to carry out studies on the five sites for housing development in east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is intended to involve the London boroughs concerned as appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *825*, what is the consultancy fee allowed for in the study of the five sites for housing identified in east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The commission will be let by competitive tender so no fee has yet been determined.

General Development Order

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his proposal to amend and consolidate the General Development Order 1977.

Mr. Waldegrave: I gave details of our proposals to amend and consolidate the GDO in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) on 4 February 1988, *Official Report*, columns *711-12*. We are now considering comments received in response to the consultation paper we issued that day. We expect to make the new order later this year.

Households

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he or his officials have yet held a meeting with members of the South East Regional Planning Conference to consider the new projections of household numbers to 2001; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend expects to meet members of the conference for this purpose soon.

Sunday Sports

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many major spectator sporting events were held on Sundays in 1987; and if he will list them.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each London borough, for each year since 1980-81, *(a)* total HIP expenditure (outturn); *(b)* HIP expenditure funded by capital receipts.

Mrs. Roe *[pursuant to her reply 26 April 1988 c. 137-8]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

London boroughs
Housing capital expenditure (outturn)

£ million

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
City of London	1·5	0·8	0·6	1·3	2·4	1·2	5·5
Barking and Dagenham	4·9	3·5	4·1	4·7	2·7	5·5	7·5
Barnet	12·1	7·7	8·1	12·3	11·8	12·1	14·3
Bexley	5·7	6·8	7·3	8·2	9·5	7·5	4·3

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Brent	27·9	25·1	28·7	32·9	42·9	25·4	26·5
Bromley	8·7	7·8	10·2	14·0	22·0	11·6	12·4
Camden	53·9	29·2	30·8	41·0	35·9	41·0	74·8
Croydon	7·7	8·7	11·7	15·9	15·6	15·7	17·7
Ealing	19·1	16·2	18·7	23·1	24·8	18·2	20·4
Enfield	9·9	9·2	10·9	11·3	12·9	12·3	15·4
Greenwich	21·6	17·7	17·3	20·4	21·7	15·1	32·6
Hackney	25·2	25·7	39·2	31·5	46·4	33·2	54·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	23·5	20·3	27·0	36·4	25·7	19·1	21·8
Haringey	37·3	25·5	38·6	49·8	37·1	29·8	35·9
Harrow	5·7	3·8	7·0	9·3	8·5	6·6	9·4
Havering	4·6	4·0	4·6	6·9	7·7	12·5	8·7
Hillingdon	11·8	11·6	14·2	16·3	18·0	15·6	16·8
Hounslow	11·6	8·5	11·3	16·8	16·9	11·1	11·2
Islington	46·3	38·9	58·7	40·2	49·2	31·9	64·3
Kensington and Chelsea	23·8	25·1	24·8	23·1	30·5	21·4	22·5
Kingston upon Thames	1·8	3·0	4·0	6·7	7·1	5·9	5·8
Lambeth	52·6	35·6	32·2	46·8	45·2	44·1	56·2
Lewisham	32·2	21·8	27·9	33·8	30·2	21·3	34·2
Merton	7·3	6·5	7·6	7·1	6·1	7·7	10·0
Newham	27·4	16·1	17·7	33·2	41·0	28·8	33·1
Redbridge	5·6	6·0	4·6	10·0	13·7	14·4	7·1
Richmond upon Thames	5·8	4·7	5·0	4·9	6·2	4·3	54·1
Southwark	42·2	30·2	46·5	49·8	37·0	43·0	47·4
Sutton	4·5	3·9	5·2	6·8	10·4	5·0	4·2
Tower Hamlets	14·8	9·1	6·7	9·9	11·3	12·0	27·6
Waltham Forest	13·3	10·3	12·3	13·3	16·1	12·7	14·5
Wandsworth	24·9	21·9	28·5	36·0	39·8	46·1	51·0
Westminster	17·5	20·1	22·0	22·7	26·1	20·1	19·1

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Racial Harassment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by local education authority in England and Wales, the latest figures on racial harassment in school; and if he will make a statement on what guidelines his Department has issued to education authorities on racial harassment.

Mrs. Rumbold: Statistical information on incidents of racial harassment in schools is not collected centrally.

Advice on dealing with racial harassment was issued in October 1983 in the form of a paper published by HM inspectorate, on "Race Relations in Schools". The paper was based on detailed discussions with a number of urban and county LEAs. Copies were sent to all chief education officers and all teacher-training institutions. The paper identified a range of actions which schools might take to encourage good race relations. HMI continue, in the course of their regular visits and formal inspections, to offer advice and guidance on good practice.

Computer Courses (Women)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will express the number of women *(a)* applying for and *(b)* starting computer courses at universities and polytechnics over the past five years as a percentage of all domestic applicants and starters; if he will take steps to promote (i) more such courses and (ii) a higher proportion of women students in such courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures for applicants are available only for the universities. They are:

Women as Proportion of All Applicants for Courses in Computing[1]

	Percentages
1982	22·9
1983	20·3
1984	18·2
1985	16·0
1986	15·4
1987	15·1

[1] There was a change in the basis of subject coding for universities in 1985.

Figures for the numbers of students starting computing courses and the proportion who were women are:

	Universities in the United Kingdom[1]		Polytechnics in England	
	UCCA acceptances	Percentage of females	New enrolments[2]	Percentage of females
1982	1,901	21·7	2,170	22·9
1983	1,935	19·7	2,955	19·9
1984	2,070	16·5	3,205	17·4
1985	2,214	16·4	3,841	17·9
1986	2,276	16·1	4,595	17·1

[1] There was a change in the basis of subject coding for universities in 1985.
[2] Full-time equivalent.

The information shows that there has been a substantial increase in overall enrolments on computing courses in recent years, reflecting demand from students and the priority which institutions and the funding bodies have given them.

The numbers of women taking these courses are increasing, though more slowly than the numbers of men. Policy on student admissions is for the institutions themselves, within the law as it relates to sex discrimination. The Government's policy for the national curriculum is in part intended to counter premature specialisation in schools and to increase the number of girls who have the grounding in mathematics and kindred

subjects which will enable them to study for the qualifications which admit to courses of higher education such as computing.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the per capita spending on education in (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) West Germany, (iii) the United States of America and (iv) Japan.

Mrs. Rumbold: The readily available information on current public expenditure on education per capita is given in the table:

Country	*Year of data*	*Expenditure per capita at 1983 prices £*[1]
United Kingdom[2]	1983	269
Germany, Federal Republic of	1983	253
USA[3]	1982	458
Japan[4]	1982	216

[1] At purchasing power parity; expenditure adjusted to calendar year, where necessary, using consumer prices indices.
[2] Excludes expenditure on nursing and paramedical courses at DHSS establishments.
[3] Includes capital expenditure.
[4] Excludes public subsidies to private education.

Language Teaching

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received the report of the committee established to advise on what children should know about language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am publishing today the report of the committee chaired by Sir John Kingman. I asked the committee to advise what, in general terms, children need to know about the English language, and in consequence what they should have been taught and be expected to understand on this score at ages 7, 11 and 16. I am grateful to the committee for its hard work. It has produced an interesting report which will contribute to discussion about the teaching of the English language and about the importance of the grammatical structure of the language and of the correct use of the spoken word.

English is one of the core subjects in the national curriculum as proposed in the Education Reform Bill now before Parliament. I am now appointing a working group on English to make recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study for English as a whole. The working group's terms of reference are set out in the table. I am specifically asking the English working group to take account of the relevant recommendations of the Kingman committee in its work on attainment targets and programmes of study.

The working group will be chaired by Professor Brian Cox, Pro-Vice Chancellor and John Edward Taylor Professor of English Literature at Manchester University. Its membership will be:

Mrs. Diane Billups, Head of Broughton Junior School, South Humberside.
Ms. Linda Cookson, Senior Tutor, Cental School of Speech and Drama.
Mr. Roald Dahl, Writer.
Mr. Roger Samways, Adviser for English and drama, Dorest LEA.
Professor David Skilton, Head of Department of English, UWIST; designated Head of the School of English Studies. Journalism and Philosophy at the new University of Wales College of Cardiff.
Mr. Brian Slough, Deputy Head, Kettering Boys' School, Northamptonshire.
Professor Michael Stubbs, Professor of Education with special reference to the teaching of English in Education, Department of English and Media Studies, University of London Institute of Education.
Dr. Charles Suckling, Chairman, Bradbury, Suckling & Partners Ltd, Scientific Consultants, member of Kingman Committee.

I expect the group to begin work in early May.

I shall be considering the Kingman committee's other detailed recommendations in due course in the light of public comment on its report and of the English working group's recommendations.

National Curriculum: Working Group on English Terms of Reference

Preamble

1. The Education Reform Bill, currently before Parliament, proposes the establishment of a National Curriculum of core and other foundation subjects for pupils of compulsory school age in England and Wales. For most of these subjects, including English which is a core subject, the Government wishes to establish clear objectives—attainment targets—for the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have acquired at or near the key ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16; and, to promote them, programmes of study describing the content, skills and processes which need to be covered during each key stage of compulsory education. Taken together, the attainment targets and programmes of study will provide the basis for assessing pupils' performance—in relation both to expected attainment, and to the next steps needed for the pupils' development.

2. Both the objectives (attainment targets) and means of achieving them (programmes of study) should leave scope for teachers to use their professional talents and skills to develop their own schemes of work, within a set framework which is known to all. *It is the task of the working group to advise on that framework for English, which is a core subject.* The framework should ensure, at the minimum, that all school leavers are competent in the use of English—written and spoken—whether or not it is their first language.

3. The Kingman Committee, established to advise the Secretary of State on what children should know about language, has made recommendations for attainment targets for knowledge about language at the ages of 7, 11 and 16. The working group should build on these to recommend attainment targets covering the grammatical structure of the English language. But English comprises both language and literature, including poetry and drama. The working group's recommendations on learning about language and its use should draw upon the English literary heritage; should promote the reading of great literature and the knowledge and appreciation of literature; and should indicate the types of literature which all pupils should cover in the course of their studies.

The Task

4. The Government has made it clear that it expects most curricular time at primary level to be taken up by the core subjects of English, maths and science. But it is important that in the primary phases attainment targets and programmes of study in the core subjects are looked at together as well as individually. The working groups on mathematics and science are well-advanced towards their final reports. The English working group is therefore asked to give immediate attention to recommendations on attainment targets for ages 7 and 11 and the associated programmes of study and to submit a report on these to the Secretary of State by *30 September 1988.*

5. By the same date, the working group is asked to submit a progress letter to the Secretary of State on its provisional thinking about the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be

expected to have attained and be able to demonstrate around the end of the academic year in which they reach the ages of 14 and 16.

6. By 30 April 1989 the working group is to submit a final report to the Secretary of State, setting out and justifying its final recommendations on attainment targets for the key ages of 14 and 16 and the associated programmes of study.

Approach

7. The working group should consult informally with relevant interests and have regard to the work of the other subject working groups, in particular that on Welsh. Additionally it should take account of:

(a) the broad framework proposed by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing for assessment and testing;

(b) the need for attainment targets which reflect the fact that in the primary stage, particularly for 7 year olds, English will support learning in all other subjects,and will be developed by how those are taught;

(c) the contribution which, more generally, English can make to learning about other subjects and the contributions which these subjects can make to learning about English, including the promotion of development of good written and spoken English in all subjects;

(d) the recommendations of the Kingman Committee on attainment targets for children's explicit and implicit knowledge about language at ages 7, 11 and 16;

(e) best practice and the results of relevant research and curriculum developments;

and the issues covered in the supplementary guidance to the Group's Chairman.

Technology

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to set up a working group to recommend attainment targets and programmes of study for technology within the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are from today establishing a working group on design and technology. The group will advise on attainment targets and programmes of study for technology within the national curriculum for secondary school pupils. The science working group which we appointed last summer is making recommendations about technology for primary school pupils.

The design and technology working group will also advise on attainment targets and programmes of study for information technology, and on a framework for design across foundation subjects, for all pupils of compulsory school age. The working group's formal terms of reference which include guidance on the approach to technology within the national curriculum are set out below. We are grateful to Lady Parkes, a governor of the BBC and a member of the Secondary Examinations Council, for agreeing to take the chair of a working group on design and technology. The other members of the group are:

Ms. Krysia Brochocka—Educational design consultant
Mrs. Elsa Davies—Educational Liaison Officer, British Institute of Management
Mr. Malcolm Deere—Education Adviser (Curriculum), TVEI Unit, Manpower Services Commission
Mr. Denis Filer—Director of Engineering, ICI plc
Mr. Terry Gibbons — Head of Design Faculty, Gwendraeth Valley School, Dyfed
Mr. John Hammond—Lecturer in Computing Science, City University
Dr. Philip Hunter — Chief Education Officer, Staffordshire
Mr. Ben Kelsey — Adviser for Business Education, Hampshire Local Education Authority and Director of the National Business and Information Studies Project
Mr. Paddy O'Hagan — Head of Faculty, Design and Technology, Northolt High School, Ealing.

The group will start work as soon as possible. We are asking it to give interim advice by 31 October and final advice by 30 April 1989.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP

Terms of reference

Background

1. The Education Reform Bill currently before Parliament provides for the establishment of a national curriculum of core and other foundation subjects for pupils of compulsory school age in England and Wales. For most subjects, including technology, the Government wishes to establish clear objectives — attainment targets — for the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16; and to promote them, programmes of study describing the content, skills and processes which need to be covered during each key stage of compulsory education. Taken together, the attainment targets and programmes of study will provide the basis for assessing a pupil's performance, in relation both to expected attainment and to the next steps needed for the pupil's development.

2. Both the objectives (attainment targets) and means of achieving them (programmes of study) should leave scope for teachers to use their professional talents and skills to develop their own schemes of work, within a set framework which is known to all. *It is the task of the Working Group on Design and Technology to advise on that framework for design and technology.*

The Task

3. The science working group is already looking at attainment targets and programmes of study for primary technology. The design and technology group should focus on the final two key stages, as defined in the Education Reform Bill—that is, the secondary phase—building on the work of the science group for the primary phase.

4. The working group is asked to submit an interim report to the Secretaries of State by 31 October 1988 outlining:

(i) the contribution which design and technology should make to the overall school curriculum and how that will inform the group's thinking about attainment targets and programmes of study;

(ii) its provisional thinking about the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have attained and be able to demonstrate at key ages;

(iii) its thinking about the programmes of study which would be consistent with the attainment targets provisionally identified.

5. By 30 April 1989 the working group is to submit a final report to the Secretaries of State setting out and justifying its final recommendations on attainment targets and the programmes of study for design and technology. In addition, the working group should recommend attainment targets and programmes of study for design and for information technology in the first two key stages, for primary pupils, to supplement the recommendations of the science working group.

Approach

6. In approaching its task the working group is to view technology as that area of the curriculum in which pupils design and make useful objects or systems, thus developing their ability to solve practical problems. The working group should assume that pupils will draw on knowledge and skills from a range of subject areas, but always involving science or mathematics. They should be taught the principles and practice of good design, the application of theoretical knowledge, and within that context the practical craft skills needed for realising their designs in wood, metal, plastics, textiles and other materials. They should also learn about the variety of modern materials and technologies in use in the

industrial and commercial world. Pupils should prepare for the world of work by learning how to work in teams as well as by themselves; by understanding the importance of functional efficiency, quality, appearance and marketability; and about the importance of working within financial and technical constraints. Modern business practice increasingly involves the use of IT. Technological education should equip pupils with basic IT skills and develop an awareness of the potential use of IT and computer technology whether in the business office, or manufacturing or commerce.

7. Technology as described above is an activity which goes "across the curriculum", drawing on and linking in with a wide range of subjects. The group should start from the basis that technology is an area of study in its own right, with its own distinctive objectives and content. This does not necessarily mean that technology must be a separately timetabled subject: schools will be free to teach technology how they choose, provided that the activity is coordinated as a clear programme and directed towards the distinctive objectives of technology. By the end of the third key stage of their compulsory education pupils should have acquired a firm basis of skills, knowledge and understanding in technology. This will provide a broad foundation on which pupils can build in undertaking technological work as defined in paragraph 6 in more specialised contexts, including other subject areas during the fourth key stage, whether for GCSE or otherwise.

8. Design will be an essential part of technology as defined above, but will also draw on and contribute to other areas of the curriculum. The Working Group is asked to consider design in all its aspects throughout the period of compulsory education, identifying and recommending attainment targets for those of particular importance in technology and recommending a framework within which other aspects will need to be developed in other subjects. The group should work on the basis that the distinctive objectives of design and technology are that a pupil at the end of his or her compulsory education, should:

(i) be able to design and make artefacts and systems, applying scientific or mathematical and other knowledge and skills;

(ii) be familiar with designing processes and have had experience of applying them to real life tasks within typical constraints (time, money etc) with due regard to cost, marketability, social, environmental and other relevant factors;

(iii) appreciate the importance of design and technology in society, historically and present day, particularly as it affects the economy.

9. The use of computer and information technology and other advance technologies in control, simulation and data storage and retrieval is becoming increasingly important in our society. This fact should be reflected in the use of computer and information technology across the school curriculum. Each subject group as it is set up is being asked to consider the scope for using computer and information technology in its subject and to frame appropriate attainment targets. However the design and technology group is asked to provide within the national curriculum a focus for the developments of computer and IT awareness, and skills such as keyboard skills and basic programming, by recommending appropriate attainment targets at the four key stages together with a supporting programme of study related to IT and basic computer skills and to awareness of the uses of advanced technology.

10. In carrying out its work the group should consult informally and selectively with relevant interests including industry and have regard to the work of other subject groups, particularly the work of the science group on primary technology. Additionally the group should take account of

(i) the broad framework proposed by TGAT for assessment and testing;

(ii) the contributions which design and technology can make to learning about other subjects, and other subjects can make to learning about design and technology;

(iii) best practice and the results of any relevant research and development, and in particular developments under TVEI.

and the issues covered in the supplementary guidance to the Group's Chairman.

Departmental Reports

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of all statutory bodies, committees of inquiries and task groups and other similar bodies which are due to report to him in 1988, with details in each case of the subject matter of the reports; when the reports are expected to be submitted to him; and when they are likely to be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* The information required is listed in the table. The list excludes Her Majesty's inspectorate and standing advisory bodies such as the University Grants Committee and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Body	*Subject*	*Due date*	*Date of publication*
Interim Advisory Committee on School teachers' pay and conditions	Pay and conditions of school teachers in England and Wales 1988-89	31 March 1988	19 April 1988
Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of the English language	Teaching of English	Spring 1988	29 April 1988
Committee of Inquiry into A levels	A level examinations	April 1988	Early Summer 1988
Committee of Inquiry into Discipline in Schools	Behaviour and discipline in schools	End 1988	Early 1989
Task Group on Assessment and Testing	Assessment and Testing arrangements for national curriculum	January 1988 and Spring 1988	First report: 12 January 1988 supplementary advice: shortly
National curriculum subject working groups on	Programmes of study and attainment targets		
Science		Summer 1988	Summer 1988
Mathematics		Summer 1988	Summer 1988
English		Autumn 1988 (primary)	Autumn 1988

Body	Subject	Due date	Date of publication
Student support review	System of supporting students in higher education	Summer 1988	Government proposes to publish its conclusions, in the light of the report, in Summer 1988
Working Party on funding of university extra-mural departments	Transitional arrangements for transfer of funding of liberal adult education in university extra-mural departments to Universities Funding Council	Summer 1988	Not yet decided
Records of Achievement National Steering Committee Report	National guidelines for introduction of Records of Achievement	Autumn 1988	Autumn 1988
Visiting Committee of the Royal College of Art	Financial and academic provision of the RCA	August 1988	Not published
Visiting Committee of Cranfield Institute of Technology	Financial and academic provision at Cranfield supported by DES funding	August 1988	Not published

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr Roc Sanford

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an independent inquiry into the circumstances under which charges were brought, and criminal proceedings conducted against Mr Roc Sanford by the Metropolitan police on the grounds of the possession of drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. An inquiry supervised by the Police Complaints Authority has already been carried out by the Metropolitan police. Its findings are still being considered.

Child Care

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has in relation to the number of teachers, social workers, medical staff and associated staff who have been vetted by police before they are employed in jobs where they work with children; and whether his Department keeps information as to the number of people refused employment and the reasons therefor.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest figures available are for the period 17 July 1986 to 31 August 1987. During this period, there were 161,276 requests for police checks under the arrangements introduced for the protection of children. Information about the professions for which these checks were carried out is not held centrally.

Information is not held centrally about the number of people refused employment as a result of information provided through these arrangements, as it is for employing authorities to determine what action to take in the light of this information and the other circumstances of the case.

Minicab Drivers (Assaults)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report on the number of assaults on minicab drivers in east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Comprehensive information about such assaults is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that his records show that in the period 1 January 1988 to 25 April 1988 there were 18 cases of theft or robbery involving cab drivers in the Leyton area in which there was also some degree of assault. These cases may include incidents in which licensed taxi drivers as well as minicab drivers were involved. We fully support the efforts which the police are making to prevent such crimes taking place and to bring to justice those who perpetrate them.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the weekly cost of keeping a prisoner on remand in *(a)* prison and *(b)* police cells.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the financial year 1986-87, the latest year for which information is available, the average weekly cost of keeping a prisoner in custody in a local prison or remand centre was £231. During the same period, the average weekly cost of keeping a prisoner on remand in a police cell was £651.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost which has fallen on police authorities in England and Wales as a result of prisoners being remanded to police cells in the first quarter of 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the costs which have fallen to police authorites in England and Wales as a result of prisoners being remanded to police cells in the first quarter of 1988 is not available, but the amount reimbursed by the prison department in the first quarter of 1988 to police authorities in respect of claims received for prisoners being remanded to police cells is £18,316,638.

Firemen

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many otherwise unemployed persons are employed as part-time firemen by fire authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not held centrally.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the practice of immigration officers handing files relating to individual applicants to those applicants.

Mr. Renton: It is not the practice of immigration officers to hand files to applicants. The individual case which I assume the hon. Member has in mind was an isolated error for which apologies have already been made.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest statistics available on the number and percentage of cases in which he did not uphold the decision to refuse entry clearance after representation by right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Appeals against refusal of entry clearance are properly a matter for the immigration appellate authorities.

Prison Population

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population per 100,000 inhabitants on 1 February 1987 and for each year since 1983 in the United Kingdom; what information he has as to the comparable figures for each member state of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Information published by the Council of Europe is shown in the table. The Council of Europe publishes information on the prison population in member states twice a year in its "Prison Information Bulletin", copies of which are held in the Library.

The figures for different countries are unlikely to be strictly comparable because the definitions of prisons and prisoners vary from one country to another, reflecting different legal and administrative systems. Such differences may have a substantial effect on the comparisons. However, the most recent information indicates that on 1 February 1987 the prison population per 100,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom, at 96, was the fourth highest among 19 member states; for seven of the 19 states, including France and Germany, the rate was over 80 per 100,000 inhabitants. Between February 1983 and February 1987, the prison population per 100,000 inhabitants increased in 13 of the member states. In England and Wales the increase was 8 per cent. This increase was substantially lower than in several other countries: Portugal (60 per cent.), Ireland (46 per cent.), Luxembourg (37 per cent.), France (31 per cent.), Netherlands (29 per cent.) and Cyprus (28 per cent.).

Prison population per 100,000 inhabitants in member states of the Council of Europe on 1 February, 1983-87

Member state	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*Ranking on 1 February 1987*	*Percentage increase February 1983 to February 1987*
Austria	114	114	112	109	103	1	−10
Belgium	[2]	72	67	64	69	8=	[2]
Cyprus	30	39	33	32	38	16	28
Denmark	63	70	68	69	69	8=	10
France	68	74	80	81	89	5	31
West Germany	103	104	100	92	84	7	−18
Greece	35	40	37	37	40	15	15
Ireland	37	48	47	52	54	13	46
Iceland	35	32	34	36	37	17=	5
Italy	65	76	78	77	57	11=	−11
Luxembourg	72	78	69	92	99	3	37
Malta	29	30	28	27	28	19	−5
Netherlands	28	31	34	35	37	17=	29
Norway	52	48	51	51	50	14	−3
Portugal	53	69	87	96	85	6	60
Spain	60	38	51	61	67	10	11
Sweden	65	57	58	56	57	11=	−12
Switzerland	58	62	68	[2]	[2]	[3]	[2]
Turkey	[2]	171	147	130	100	2	[2]
United Kingdom	[1]91	[1]88	90	94	96	4	[1]6
England and Wales	87	86	88	92	94	[3]	8
Scotland	101	90	97	109	109	[3]	9
Northern Ireland	[1]162	[1]156	135	125	121	[3]	[1]−25

Source: Council of Europe, Prison Information Bulletin, number 9 and earlier issues.
[1] Based on additional figures provided by the Northern Ireland Office.
[2] Not available.
[3] Not shown.

British Citizens Overseas (Franchise)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to implement the Government's proposals to extend the franchise for British citizens overseas; and what plans he has for consultation about this matter.

Mr. Hurd: During this Parliament I intend to bring forward legislation to extend the eligibility of British citizens living overseas to register as electors in this country. I have placed in the Library copies of a consultation paper which the Home Departments are issuing today to representatives of the local authorities.

electoral registration officers, and main political parties. This discusses possible ways of giving effect to our manifesto commitment to British citizens overseas.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Personal Computers (Exports)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the effect of current restrictions on the temporary export of personal computers by British business men; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am aware of the problems which controls on the temporary export of personal computers have been causing British business men. In agreement with Her Majesty's Customs, steps have been taken to ease the burden. An export licence will no longer be required for the temporary export to most free world destinations of many small personal computers for the visitor's own use.

Radioactive Packages (Export Licences)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any export licences were granted in the years *(a)* 1970 to May 1979, and *(b)* May 1979 to the present to Amersham International plc, or its predecessor, the Radiochemical Centre, for shipments of radioactive packages from the United Kingdom to the Centre Etudes Nucléairs at Mol in Belgium.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to make public information of this kind.

WALES

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what courses are available in Wales for nurses and midwives to undertake further training to improve the scope and standard of their skills.

Mr. Grist: The following courses are available in Wales to enable nurses and midwives to undertake further training to improve the scope and standard of their skills:

Courses approved by Welsh National Board

(a) Courses approved by the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (WNB) and qualifications recorded on the register of nurses, midwives and health visitors. This training covers First and Second level registration.

Registered General Nurse
Registered Mental Nurse
Registered Mental Handicap Nurse
Sick Children's Nurse
Enrolled Nurse (General)
Midwifery
Health Visitor

(b) Courses approved by the Welsh National Board as continuing education.

District Nurse
District Enrolled Nurse
Fieldwork Teacher
Practical Work Teacher
Advanced Diploma in Midwifery
Certificate of Further Education
Practice Nurse
Supervisor of Supervised Practice
Assessor of Supervised Practice
General Intensive Care Nursing for EN(G)
Operating Department Nursing for RGN/RSCN
Operating Department Nursing for EN(G)
Accident and Emergency Nursing for RGN
Orthopaedic Nursing for RGN
Orthopaedic Nursing for EN(G)
Oncological Nursing for RGN
Cardiac Nursing for RGN
Burns and Plastic Surgery Nursing RGN
Nursing Elderly People for RGN/ENG(G) RMN/EN(M)/RNMH/EN(MH)
Special and Intensive Nursing Care of the Newborn for RGN/RSCN/RM
Family Planning Nursing for RGN/RMN/RNMH/RSCN/RM/RHV
Principles of Intensive Care for RGN/RSCN
Continuing Care of the Dying Patient and the Family
Care and Management of Persons with Aids
(WNB Revised) Developments in Mental Handicap Care
Nursing Elderly People
Introduction of Promotion of Continence and Managment of Incontinence
Introduction to the Understanding and Application of Research
Teaching and assessing in Clinical Practice
WNB/CCETSW Working together with Mentally Handicapped People: The Team Approach
Community psychiatric nursing
Refresher courses for nurse teachers and midwives

Courses which are not directly approved by, or under the control of the Welsh National Board

(a) Courses run by University College of Wales, Cardiff.

Batchelor in Education (full nursing option for any nurse wishing to become a nurse teacher)
Postgraduate Certificate/Certificate in Education (enabling nurses to register as teachers of nurses)

(b) Courses run by University College of Wales, Swansea, Institute of Health Care Studies.

Diploma in Nurse Training
Diploma in Health Visiting
Research Appreciation Course
Research Training Programme
Advanced Diploma in Midwifery
Diploma in Health Visiting Care
Refresher Courses for Nurses and Health Visitors working in the Community
Introduction to Counselling
Advanced Counselling
Care of the Patient with Cancer
Bereavement in Pregnancy and the Early Neonatal Period
Practical Work Teacher and Field Work Courses
Promotion of Continence and Better Management of Incontinence in the Community
Welsh Nurse Management Development Course
Standards of Care and Quality Assurance
Supervisor of Supervised Practice
AIDS: The Nursing perspective

(c) Courses run by the University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff

BN (Bachelor in Nursing)
BN (Masters in Nursing)
Health Visiting and District Nursing Course
Fieldwork Teacher and Fieldwork Courses

(d) Courses run by the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education, Wrexham

Bachelor in Education (contains full nursing option for any nurse wishing to become a nurse teacher) Diploma in Nursing Studies
Health Visiting and District Nurse Training Course
Practical Working Teachers Training for Health Visitors and District Nurses
Courses for the Enrolled Nurse who wishes to become a District Nurse
Primary Nurse Course

(e) Courses jointly run by South Glamorgan School of Nursing and South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education

Bachelor in Nursing (4 year part-time course; leads to Diploma in Nursing Studies after 2 years)

(f) Course run by the Manpower Consultancy Service of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority

Welsh Management Development Scheme for Nurses and Professions Allied to Medicine

(g) Schemes run by the National Health Service Training Authority

General Management Training Schemes. 1, 2 and 3 which together form the National Accelerated Development Programme for management training in the NHS. The scheme is open to nurses and midwives

(h) Courses run by the Open University

A systematic approach to Nursing care
Mental Handicap: patterns for living
Coronary Heart Disease
Drug use and Misuse
Caring for Older People
Caring for Children and the Young
Mental Health problems in Old Age *[from May 1988]*

In addition to these courses, district health authorities in Wales run their own post-basic education courses geared to meeting their own individual needs. These include staff nurse development programmes for newly qualified staff nurses.

Hospitals (Staffing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the recommended staffing levels by patient category in Welsh hospitals; and what are the current staffing levels.

Mr. Grist: There are no recommended staffing levels by patient category in hospitals. The determination of appropriate staffing levels is an operational matter for individual health authorities.

Staff numbers by individual hospitals are not held centrally. With the exception of medical and dental staff and nursing and midwifery staff, information which is held centrally does not distinguish between community and hospital based staff.

The table provides a breakdown by authority, and between hospital and community based staff where appropriate, at 30 September 1986:

	Clwyd	*E. Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*M. Glam*	*Pembs*	*Powys*	*S. Glam*	*W. Glam*	*WHC-SA*	*Wales*
Medical and Dental (Hospital based)	246	167	288	134	336	59	15	630	274	—	2,149
Medical and Dental (Community based)	41	30	57	31	56	11	17	44	34	—	321
Nursing and Midwifery (Hospital based)	3,296	1,926	3,939	1,796	4,671	565	992	4,171	3,059	—	24,415
Nursing and Midwifery (Community based)	375	244	415	235	489	111	112	425	366	—	2,772
Professional and Technical	535	333	684	367	686	115	117	1,341	590	3	4,771
Works and Maintenance	221	159	300	161	404	39	91	400	271	166	2,212
Administrative and Clerical	779	517	947	560	1,067	166	171	1,424	798	495	6,924
Ambulance	187	141	256	185	283	46	114	193	157	—	1,562
Ancillary	1,221	795	1,562	812	1,978	204	372	1,859	1,395	12	10,210
Total all staff	6,901	4,312	8,448	4,281	9,970	1,316	2,001	10,487	6,944	676	55,336

A breakdown between hospital and community staff for 1987 is not yet available. Overall figures as at 30 September 1987 are given in the table.

	Clwyd	*E. Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*M. Glam*	*Pembs*	*Powys*	*S. Glam*	*W. Glam*	*WHCSA*	*Wales*
Medical and Dental[1]	287	197	345	165	392	70	32	674	308	—	2,470
Nursing and Midwifery	3,673	2,194	4,337	2,088	5,413	679	1,125	4,752	3,503	—	27,764
Professional and Techincal	553	345	725	370	723	131	118	1,407	621	—	4,993
Works and Maintenance	217	154	311	151	401	31	90	388	249	176	2,168
Administrative and Clerical	800	518	965	541	1,097	174	193	1,490	824	485	7,087
Ambulance	191	150	245	186	279	46	119	207	166	—	1,589
Ancillary	1,186	729	1,492	770	1,860	216	359	1,818	1,368	12	9,810
Total all staff	6,907	4,287	8,420	4,271	10,165	1,347	2,036	10,736	7,039	673	55,881

[1] Figures for 1987 are not yet available; 1986 figures included.

Water Rates

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the average payment and the percentage increases in the Welsh water rate in each year since 1974.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the table:

Welsh Water Authority: average household bill

	£	*Percentage*[1]
1975-76	37·44	—
1976-77	43·91	17·3
1977-78	47·66	8·5
1978-79	44·11	(7·4)
1979-80	49·08	11·3
1980-81	60·38	23·0
1981-82	66·76	10·6

	£	Percentage[1]
1982-83	[2]81·34	21·8
1983-84	86·35	6·2
1984-85	92·77	7·4
1985-86	103·91	12·0
1986-87	114·01	9·7
1987-88	122·61	7·5
1988-89	134·57	9·7

[1] Percentage increase over previous year.
[2] The rateable value was increased from £120 to £124 in 1982-83.
Notes: Comparable figures are not available for 1974-75 for the average household.
In 1978-79 the average bill decreased by 7·4 per cent. over the previous year.

Central and Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating the capital expenditure by central and local government departments in each of the counties of Wales for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Walker: A breakdown of the totality of central Government expenditure in Wales is not readily available in the form requested. However, for the major programmes within my responsibility, the information is estimated to be as follows:

Gross capital expenditure in 1986-87

£ million

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan
Local authorities	53·004	41·956	87·344	27·665	80·329	15·357	62·458	61·611
Direct central Government:								
(i) health[1]	6·109	7·405	6·976	2·579	6·753	1·269	10·726	12·167
(ii) roads	27·584	19·414	8·508	25·162	9·199	3·222	3·813	2·253
(iii) agricultural grants[2]	1·971	4·245	0·400	2·361	0·362	4·757	0·066	0·254

[1] Health authority capital expenditure, excluding residual WHCSA expenditure.
[2] Net of EC receipts and excluding the Agriculture Improvement Scheme.

For details of regional development grant and regional selective assistance expenditure, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 24 February, *Official Report* columns *215-16*.

Urban Aid

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each county and for each district in Wales the number and the cost of schemes approved by his Department under the urban aid programme since 1974.

Mr. Grist: Information prior to 1979-80 is not available in the form required. Since that time the total allocations made to individual local authorities and the number of new schemes approved are as follows:

Local authorities	*Allocation £ million*	*Number of new schemes*
Clwyd County Council	10·2	57
Alyn and Deeside District Council	3·6	39
Colwyn Borough Council	0·2	6
Delyn Borough Council	7·8	47
Glyndwr District Council	0·2	4
Rhuddlan Borough Council	0·2	5
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council	7·7	70
Dyfed County Council	3·4	29
Carmarthen District Council	0·2	4
Ceredigion District Council	0·1	2
Dinefwr Borough Council	1·4	17
Llanelli Borough Council	5·2	50
Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council	2·4	22
South Pembrokeshire District Council	2·3	26
Gwent County Council	5·7	50
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	7·7	109
Islwyn Borough Council	3·4	70
Monmouth District Council	0·2	2
Newport Borough Council	8·3	98
Torfaen Borough Council	2·7	48
Gwynedd County Council	4·9	30
Aberconwy Borough Council	0·1	3
Arfon Borough Council	2·5	34
Dwyfor District Council	0	0
Meirionnydd District Council	0·9	2
Ynys Môn Borough Council	1·0	10
Mid Glamorgan County Council	9·3	82
Cynnon Valley Borough Council	4·2	68
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council	5·3	67
Ogwr Borough Council	2·9	34
Rhondda Borough Council	8·0	101
Rhymney Valley District Council	4·6	36
Taff-Ely Borough Council	1·5	21
Powys County Council	0·6	9
Brecknock Borough Council	0·4	3
Montgomeryshire District Council	0·1	4
Radnor District Council	0·1	1
South Glamorgan County Council	9·9	129
Cardiff County Council	8·3	87
Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council	2·2	32
West Glamorgan County Council	4·8	59
Port Talbot Borough Council	3·7	61
Lliw Valley Borough Council	0·8	9
Neath Borough Council	3·4	40
Swansea County Council	6·7	83

Welsh Crafts Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make an announcement concerning the future financing, structure and marketing of the Welsh crafts industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I announced a comprehensive packagoe of support for the Welsh craft industry on 27 April. The arrangements have been welcomed by all the key bodies involved, including the Welsh Development Agency, Mid-Wales Development and the Wales Craft Council.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those primary schools in Powys which *(a)* have classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction of first or second language pupils, *(b)* have classes of first or second language pupils where some of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh, and *(c)* teach no Welsh or where Welsh is taught as a second language but not used as a teaching medium.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

POWYS SCHOOLS WITH SOME CLASSES WHERE WELSH IS THE SOLE OR MAIN MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

School Names

Banw County Primary School
Carno County Primary School
Llanfair Caereinion County Primary School
Machynlleth County Primary Junior
Trefeglwys County Primary School
Ardwyn Nursery and Infants School
Machynlleth County Primary School
Ysgol Maesydre
Hafren County Primary School
Llanfyllin County Primary School
Ysgol Glantwymyn
Ysgol Pennant
Llanwrtyd Wells County Primary
Cwmtwrch County Primary School
Ysgol Gymraeg Ynyscedwyn County Primary
Ysgol Y Bannau
C. in W. Llanerfyl School
Trefonnen C. in W. School

POWYS SCHOOLS WITH TEACHING THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH AS A FIRST OR SECOND LANGUAGE

School Name

Llanbrynmair County Primary School
Llanwddyn County Primary School
Meifod County Primary School
Pontrobert County Primary School
Cynlais County Primary School
Gurnos Infant School
Penycae County Primary School
Bronllys County Primary School
Llanfihangel C. in W. (A)
Velindre C. in W. School

POWYS SCHOOLS WITH NO TEACHING THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

School Name

Aberhafesp C. P. School
Abermule Dolforwyn School
Arddleen C. P. School
Berriew C. P. School
Caersws C. P. School
Carreghofa C. P. School
Dolfor C. P. School
Leighton C. P. School
Llandinam C. P. School
Llangurig C. P. School
Pantycrai C. P. School
Penygloddfa C. P. School
Trefnanney C. P. School
Tregynon C. P. School
Ladywell Green N. & I. School
Guilsfield C. P. School
Llanidloes C. P. School
Buttington/Trewern C. P.
Brynhafren C. P. School
Churchstoke C. P. School
Maesyrhandir C. P. School
Oldford Nurs. & Inf. School
Treowen C. P. School
Franksbridge C. P. School
Llanbister C. P. School
Llandrindod Wells C. P. School
Llanfihangel Rhydithon C. P.
Bwlch-Y-Sarnau C. P. School
Rhosgoch C. P. School
Presteigne C. P. School
Radnor Valley C. P. School
Crossgates C. P. School
Mount Street C. P. School
Libanus C. P. School
Builth Wells C. P. School
Cray C. P. School
Defynnog C. P. School
Trecastle C. P. School
Ysgol Thomas Stephens
Gurnos C. P. Junior
Penrhos C. P School
Glanrhyd C. P. School
Abercraf C. P. School
Caehopkin C. P. School
Colbren C. P. School
Crickhowell C. P. School
Llanigon C. P. School
Cradoc C. P. School
Hay-on-Wye C. P. School
Llangynior C. P. School
Talgarth C. P. School
Irfon Valley C. P. School

POWYS SCHOOLS WITH NO TEACHING THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

School name

Llanfaes C.P. School
Llanfechain C.I.W. School
Manafon School
Montgomery C.I.W. School
Gungrog C.I.W. Infants School
Bettws C.I.W. School
Forden C.I.W. School
Llandysilio C.I.W. School
Castle Caereinion C.I.W.
Beguildy C.I.W. School
Gladestry C.I.W. School
Howey V.C.P. School
Newbridge-on-Wye V.P.
Nantmel C.E. School
Clyro C.I.W. School
Ffynnon Gynydd School
Knighton C.I.W. School
Rhayader C.I.W. School
Llanelwedd C.I.W. School
Llanfrynach C.I.W. School
Cwmdu C.I.W. School
Talybont-on-Usk C.I.W.
Llangattock C.I.W. School
Llangorse V.P. School
Kerry C.I.W. School
Llansantffraid C.I.W. Aided
Sarn C.E. Aided School
Whitton Dame Anna Child's End
Glasbury C.I.W. (A) School
Llanbedr C.I.W. (Aided)
Archdeacon Griffiths Primary School
Priory C.I.W. Primary School
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic V.A. School

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those primary schools in Clwyd which *(a)* have classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction of first or second language pupils, *(b)* have classes of first or second language pupils where some of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh and *(c)* teach no Welsh, or where there are classes where Welsh is taught as a second language but not used as a teaching medium.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

CLWYD SCHOOLS WITH SOME CLASSES WHERE WELSH IS THE SOLE OR MAIN MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

School name

Ysgol Gymraeg Mornant
Ysgol Glanrafon

Ysgol Terrig
Ysgol Dewi Sant
Ysgol Gwenffrwd
Ysgol Glan Morfa
Ysgol Bod Alaw
Ysgol Dinmael
Yr Ysgol Pentrefoelas
Ysgol Gynradd Tynyfelin
Ysgol Gynradd Cerrigydrudion
Ysgol Gynradd Henllan
Nantglyn County Primary School
Rhydgaled County Primary School
Ysgol Tan-y-Fron
Ysgol Llannefydd
Ysgol Bro Aled
Twm O'R Nant School
Llanarmon District County School
Bro Cernyw School
Ysgol Min-y-Ddol
Clocaenog School
Ysgol Gynradd Pentrecelyn
Ysgol Caer Drewyn
Ysgol Bryn Tabor
Ysgol Y Llys
Ysgol Bodhyfryd
Ysgol Penbarras
Ysgol Heol Caer
Ysgol Hooson
Ysgol Gynradd Llanrhaeadr
Llangwm County Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Tremeirchion
Ysgol Reoledig Pantpastynog
Llanelian Aided Primary

CLWYD SCHOOLS WITH TEACHING THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH AS A FIRST OR SECOND LANGUAGE

School name

Buckley C.P. School
Ysgol Llanfynydd
Rhoshelyg C.P. School
Brynford C.P. School
Ysgol Bodfari
West Lea County Infants
Bodnant Junior School
Wepre Lane C.P. School
Ysgol Esgob Morgan
Llanfair Talhaiarn Shool
Llwydgoed School
Old Colwyn Junior School
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr
Cefn Meiriadoc C.P. School
Ysgol Frongoch
Ysgol Bryn Clwyd
Ysgol Y Parc Infants School
Ysgol Cynddelw
Pontfadog C.P. School
Llanrhaeadr Y.M. C.P. School
Ysgol Bro Cynllaith
Ysgol Gynradd Cyffylliog
Ysgol Y Rhewl
Betws Gwerfil Goch School
Yr Ysgol Gynradd Carrog
Yr Ysgol Gynradd Sirol
Gwyddelwern C.P. School
Llandrillo C.P. School
Ysgol Gynradd Maes Hyfryd
Rhes-Y-Cae Primary School
Llantysilio Primary School
Betws Yn Rhos Primary School
Ysgol Reoledig Llanfair
Borthyn VC Primary School
Ysgol A Brynglwys
Ysgol Eglwys Derwen

CLWYD SCHOOLS WITH NO TEACHING THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

School name

Ysgol Glan Aber county primary
Merllyn county primary school
Coed Talon county primary school
Custom House Lane county primary school
Dee Road infants school
Golftyn county primary infants school
Ysgol Hiraddug Dyserth school
Ewloe Green county primary school
Bryn Garth county primary school
Gwynedd county primary school
Ysgol Maes Edwin school
Greenfield county primary school
Ysgol y Fron
Perth-y-Terfyn infants school
Ysgol Estyn Hope county primary school
Ysgol Gynradd Licswm
Mynydd Isa junior county primary school
Northop Hall county primary school
Bodnant infants school
Rhuallt county primary school
Ysgol y Castell county primary
Christ Church county primary school
Ysgol Llywelyn
Wood Memorial county primary school
Sealand county primary school
Shotton county infants school
Sychdyn county primary school
Ysgol Trelogan
Bryn Pennant county primary school
Carmel county primary school
Bryn Deva county primary school
Sandycroft county primary school
Gwernymynydd county primary school
Ysgol y Faenol
Ysgol Penmorfa
Emmanuel county primary school
Queensferry county primary school
Bryn Coch county primary school
Mountain Lane county primary school
Ysgol y Foel
Ysgol Melyd
Bryn Gwalia county primary school
Ysgol y Ddol
Ysgol Bryn Hedydd
Hawarden county infants school
Ysgol Derwen
Penyffordd county primary school
The Rofft county primary school
Golftyn junior school
Saltney Ferry county primary school
Wat's Dyke infant school
Ysgol y Waun
Taliesin junior school

Abermorddu C.P. school
Southdown C.P. school
Drury C.P. school
Broughton infants school
Cornist Park infants school
Ysgol Derwenfa
Penarlag C.P. school
Ysgol Owen Jones primary
Broughton junior school
Conwy Road infants C.P.
Douglas Road infants school
Llandrillo-Yn-Rhos junior
Ysgol Babanod Mochdre
Ysgol T. Gwynn Jones
Penmaenrhos infants school
Towyn junior C.P. school
Abergele infant C.P. school
Ysgol Cystennin
Llandrillo-Yn-Rhos infants school
Ysgol Y Foryd
Gwaenynog infants C.P. school
Froncysyllte C.P. school
Garth C.P. school
Chirk infants school
Ceiriog junior C.P. school
Madoc C.P. school
Ysgol Gynradd Cefn Mawr
Cefn Mawr infants C.P. school
Johnstown junior C.P. school
Penycae junior C.P. school
Penycae infants school
Ysgol Y Ponciau Primary

Ysgol Maes Y L'on primary
Gellifor C.P. school
Graianrhyd C.P. school
Llanarmon Yn Ial C.P. school
Acton Park junior C.P. school
Alexandra C.P. junior school
Alexandra infants C.P. school
Brynteg County school
Bwlchgwyn C.P. school
Tanyfron C.P. school
Gwersyllt junior C.P. school
Gwynfryn C.P. school
Park junior school
Park C.P. infants school
New Broughton junior school
New Broughton infants school
Pentre Broughton junior school
Pentre Broughton infants C.P. school
Penygelli junior school
Penygelli infants school
Rhosddu primary school
Rhostyllen County Primary Infant School
Victoria County Primary Junior School
Victoria Infants County Primary School
Hafod Y Wern Infants County Primary School
Hafod Y Wern Junior School
Gwenfro Infants County Primary School
Gwenfro Junior County Primary School
Rhostyllen Junior County Primary School
Rhosymedre Junior County Primary School
Acton Park County Primary Infant School
Borras Park County Primary Infant School
Deiniol County Primary School
Borras Park Junior County Primary School
Rhosymedre Infants County Primary
Bryn Golau Infants School
Barker's Lane County Primary School
Wat's Dyke County Primary School
Ysgol Y Drindod School
St. Elfod Junior School
Johnstown Infants School
Ysgol John Davies
A[illegible] Lane County Primary School
Ysgol Sant Dunawd
Ysgol Bryn Collen Llangollen
Holt County Primary School
Heulfre County Primary School
Ysgol Gronant
Ysgol Y Gaer
Pendorlan Junior County Primary School
Ysgol Tan Y Marian
Rhos St. Ruthin English Med County Primary School
Rhos County Primary School
Ysgol Pen Y Bryn
Nannerch Primary School
Talwrn Green School
Nercwys Primary School
St. Asaph Infants School
Higher Wych Primary School
St. Peter's Primary School
Ysgol-y-Wern
Pentre Primary School
St. George Primary School
Llysfaen Primary School
Eyton Primary School
Isycoed Primary School
Llanbedr Primary School
Llangedwyn Primary School
Trefnant Primary School
St. Giles Junior School
St. Giles Infants Schools
Ysgol Llanddulas
Bronington Primary School
Ysgol Yr Esgob
Madras Primary School
St. Mary's R.C. Primary School
St. Winefredes R.C. School
St. David's R.C. Shop
St. Anthonys R.C. Primary School
Ven Edward Morgan R.C. Primary
St. Winefride's R.C. School
Ysgol Mair, J.M. INF. R.C.
Trelawnyd Primary School
Rector Drew Primary School
Whitford Primary School
Hanmer Primary School
St. Ethelwold's Primary School
Pentrobin Primary School
St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School
St. Mary's R.C. Primary School
Minera Primary School
Gresford (All Saints) P. School
St. Mary's Primary (Ruabon) School
St. Mary's Primary (Brymbo) School
St. Anne's R.C. Primary School
St. Mary's C. in W. Aided School

EMPLOYMENT

Nitrosamines (Safety Guidelines)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals and guidelines his Department is giving to industry to implement new machine design, material substitution, improved ventilation and hygiene to eradicate the possible cancer causing hazards of synthetic metal cutting and grinding fluids contaminated with nitrosamines.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has recently published guidance note EH49 entitled "Nitrosamines in synthetic metal cutting and grinding fluids". A copy will be placed in the Library. This guidance note is available to the general public through HMSO and gives information and guidance on the occurrence and hazards of nitrosamines in synthetic metal cutting fluids and the precautions needed to elimate or control those hazards.

National Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the future of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations calling for the scheme to be abolished. The Government have made clear that they understand the views expressed, but have explained that there are no present plans for change.

Foreign Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the total costs incurred by his Department on foreign travel during the financial year 1987-88, identified by *(a)* ministerial travel and *(b)* travel abroad by civil servants.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* During the financial year 1987-88 approximately £50,000 was spent on travel abroad by Ministers and immediate staff and approximately £600,000 was spent on travel abroad by DE group officials.

SCOTLAND

Rating Revaluation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the details of the system to be used to limit commercial rate increases after the 1990 revaluation.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last week announced plans to cushion Scottish businesses from the full effects of increases in their rates bills brought about by the 1990 revaluation. Our intention is to place a ceiling on the amount of the increase which any non-domestic ratepayer will face in any one year following the revaluation. We also recognise that, in the case of small businesses, rates tend to form a higher share of costs. We intend, therefore, to take power to provide more generous arrangements for small businesses. The levels of the ceilings and the definition of small businesses will be decided once the effects of the revaluation can be more clearly judged.

Deprived Areas

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the criteria used in allocating grants to areas of deprivation; and if he will list those areas to which grants have been allocated.

Mr. Lang: Urban areas with levels of deprivation in the worst 10 per cent. in Scotland qualify for assistance under the urban programme. In the current year new grants have been allocated to a range of projects in all mainland regions except Borders and Highland regions. The eligible areas are listed on page 18 of "New Life for Urban Scotland" published on 29 March 1988.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning his recent consultative document on pesticide residues.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have to date received one substantive written response.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his long-term policy with regard to farm incomes.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's policy is to promote a viable and competitive agricultural industry. The reforms of the CAP agreed at the recent European Council should lead to a better balance of supply and demand which should lead to farmers having greater stability in the long run and a better atmosphere within which to make sound business decisions about the future.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education Costs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost per pupil of education in Northern Ireland at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary levels; what were the equivalent figures five and 10 years ago in cash and real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The recurrent cost figures are as follows:

	1976-77 £	*1981-82* £	*1986-87* £
Cash prices			
Primary	257·28	560·60	794·18
Secondary	404·30	853·05	1,312·08
Real terms			
Primary	630·84	716·27	794·18
Secondary	991·32	1,089·93	1,312·08

Unit expenditure in 1986-87 (the latest year for which figures are available) has more than trebled in cash terms from 1976-77 levels. In real terms the increases are over 25 per cent. and should be set against a backcloth of falling enrolments, down more than 8 per cent. (or 31,000 pupils) in these 10 years. This is clear evidence of the Government's continuing commitment to education in the Province.

Adult Training Programme

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of, and if he will list, the respondents to the Department of Economic Development's advertisement in the *Belfast Telegraph* of 3 March on the new adult training programme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: A total of 367 persons and organisations responded to the Department's advertisement published in local newspapers throughout Northern Ireland during March 1988. These responses are being treated in confidence by the Department and it would not therefore be appropriate to list the respondents.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the applicability of the new arrangements for the adult training programme for Northern Ireland; and when the new arrangements will be announced.

Mr. Viggers: The new arrangements for adult training in Great Britain recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment do not extend to Northern Ireland. Consideration is now being given to the production of corresponding proposals for Northern Ireland which take account of the local circumstances. These proposals will be announced in due course.

Economic Development

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the funds expended in 1986-87 and 1987-88 on economic development through the Industrial Development Board and the local enterprise development unit.

Mr. Viggers: Of the funds allocated to economic development in Northern Ireland in 1986-87 £107 million was expended by the Industrial Development Board and £25·5 million by the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

During the 1987-88 financial year expenditure by the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit was £99·5 million and £22 million respectively.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on community economic development; and if he will list the initiatives or projects supported or funded by the Department of Economic Development in 1986-87 and 1987-88 to stimulate this form of economic development.

Mr. Viggers: The Government are committed to encouraging local communities to play as full a part as possible in economic development and job creation throughout Northern Ireland. To this end the action for community employment scheme provides employment opportunities for persons who have been unemployed for more than one year in a wide range of projects of benefit to the community. In the year 1986-87 6,150 were employed under the ACE scheme at a cost of £28·54 million. In 1987-88 6,200 were employed at a cost of £28·84 million. As part of the ACE programme a pilot enterprise scheme was launched in May 1987 to help ACE workers move into self-employment. During 1987-88 a total of 84 applications were received under the scheme and of these 51 were approved. The local enterprise programme has supported the establishment of 35 locally based business-led enterprise groups capable of accommodating and supporting 1,000 small businesses and 3,000 jobs by the end of this year. Assistance totalling £3·5 million has been offered under the programme during the past two years.

Substitute Teachers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in view of the fact that one to two-day courses for teachers are ineligible for substitute cover, and the implications for health and safety standards, he will review the operation of substitute teacher regulations in primary schools in Northern Ireland with particular regard to allowing primary school principals to obtain a substitute teacher in the first and second day of absence.

Dr. Mawhinney: A review of the substitution provision is being carried out by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

The teachers regulations provide that:

- in the case of primary schools with three or fewer teachers full substitute cover is provided;
- in the case of schools with an average daily enrolment of 222 pupils or fewer substitute cover is provided after the first day of a teacher's absence or from the first day if a teacher's absence is a planned absence of mor than one day's duration; and
- in all other schools substitute cover is provided after the second day on which a teacher is absent or from the first day of absence if the teacher's absence is a planned absence of more than two days' duration.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many representations from trade unions and individual teachers he received concerning the implementation of the substitute teacher regulations in primary schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland Teachers Council has raised the matter of substitution cover at the Negotiating committee on Teachers Salaries and Conditions of Service. Representations have also been made by the National Association of Head Teachers and by individual teachers of two primary schools.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial savings have been made by the Department of Education by the implementation of substitute teacher regulations in primary schools in Northern Ireland since September 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested. However, in the period 1 September 1987 to 31 March 1988 compared with the corresponding period last year the number of days on which substitutions were employed in all schools, decreased by 25,000. This represents an estimated financial saving of £1·5 million, but this may not be wholly attributable to the introduction of the new substitutes provisions.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much per day it costs the Department of Education to employ a substitute teacher in a primary school in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the current average daily salary and associated employer's superannuation and national insurance contributions is £59.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many substitute teachers were employed in primary schools in each of the education and library boards in Northern Ireland in each academic year from 1980-81 to 1987-88;

(2) what percentage of the primary education budget was allocated to the employment of substitute teachers in the primary sector in Northern Ireland in each academic year from 1980-81 to 1987-88.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the salary cost in the financial year 1987-88 (the only year for which figures are available) as a percentage of the total provisional expenditure on primary schools is 4·3 per cent.

Belfast Action Teams

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the remit of the Belfast action teams; if he will list the budgets for each of the existing and proposed teams; and what funding has been made available to community groups under this initiative.

Mr. Needham: The remit of the Belfast action teams is to secure an improvement in the quality of life and opportunities for people living in areas of multiple social and economic deprivation through an area-based strategy involving the local community. The principal elements of this strategy are the creation of employment, the enhancement of employment opportunities, the better co-ordination where appropriate of public services and an improvement in the physical environment of the area. The existing four teams each have a budget of £500,000 per annum as will any further teams. During the financial year 1987-88 community groups received £626,000 under this initiative.

Rates

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Housing Executive tenants in receipt of supplementary benefit, having their rent deducted at source, will now be paying their 20 per cent. portion of rates through the post office.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I am informed by the chairman that the executive estimate that some 77,000 of its tenants previously in receipt of supplementary benefit will have to pay at least 20 per cent. of the rates on their homes.

Of these 77,000, some 64,000 had previously their rent and rates charges met in full. The remainder had to meet charges because of non-dependants in the household.

Housing Executive (Arbitration)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *169*, about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will for each of the contracts concerned indicate the date of the final certificates.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I have been advised by the chief executive that the dates of the final certificates for each of the contracts concerned were:

(a) 30 May 1986
(b) 19 March 1987
(c) 20 January 1987
(d) 12 May 1987

Housing Executive Contracts

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to institute the practice of a technical audit for Housing Executive contracts, as recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has already developed a system for the audit of its building contracts in line with the recommendations of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *169*, about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will for each of the contracts concerned give the actual sums paid at arbitration for *(a)* the clerks of works, *(b)* legal fees, *(c)* technical costs and *(d)* staff costs.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that no specific sums were paid at arbitration for the clerks of works; technical costs or staff costs. The following costs were paid by the Housing Executive in respect of contractors legal fees for each of the contracts concerned:

(a) £2,990.
(b) Nil.
(c) Nil.
(d) £2,500.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer of 23 March to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, *Official Report*, column *169*, about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will indicate for each of the contracts concerned the date of *(a)* acceptance of tender, *(b)* the contract sum, *(c)* the contract period and *(d)* the date of possession of site.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the information is as follows:

	Acceptance of tender	*Contract sum* £	*Contract period*	*Date of possession of site*
(a)	18 May 1979	147,636·96	18 months	31 May 1979
(b)	23 March 1984	120,108·00	20 weeks	31 March 1984
(c)	27 July 1981	202,056·00	4 weeks	17 August 1981
(d)	20 October 1981	125,531·85	11 months	9 November 1981

Housing Executive (Arbitrations)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *169*, about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will indicate *(a)* the contractual date for completion and *(b)* the contractual date for final measurements for each of the contracts concerned.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the contractual dates for completion and final measurement respectively for each of the four contracts were:—

(a) 18 November 1980 and 18 May 1981;
(b) 13 August 1984: no specific date for final measurement was required in this form of demolition contract;
(c) 17 December 1981 and 17 June 1982;
(d) 9 October 1982 and 9 April 1983.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *169*, about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will indicate for each of the contracts concerned the amount of the bills of adjustments.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the amounts of the bills of adjustment for each of the contracts concerned were:—

(a) £261,359·00
(b) £163,780·84
(c) £209,585·35
(d) £164,384·00

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many contractors began arbitration between themselves and the Housing Executive in the financial year 1986-87; what were the total sums claimed; how many of these arbitration proceedings were settled and at what cost to the executive during that year; and how many have been settled to date.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that eight contractors began arbitration in the year 1986-87; the total sum claimed was approximately £1·52 million; three of these arbitration proceedings were settled in 1986-87 at a total cost to the Housing Executive of approximately £34,420; and a total of five have been settled to date.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 23 March, *Official Report,* column *169,* about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will for each of the contracts concerned indicate the amount certified at the dates of completion certificates.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the following amounts were certified at practical completion for each of the contracts concerned:

(a) £188,473·43
(b) £146,780·84: no provision was made in this type of demolition contract for a certificate of practical completion. This amount was determined when the contractor deemed the contract to have been completed.
(c) £162,000.
(d) £146,300.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 23 March, *Official Report,* column *169,* about the Housing Executive regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will for each of the contracts concerned indicate the amount granted at arbitration and whether these amounts are included in the sums paid in respect of the bills of adjustments.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the following amounts were agreed in settlement between the parties for each of the contracts concerned and were included in the sums paid in respect of the bills of adjustment:

(a) £9,500.
(b) £17,000.
(c) £12,420.
(d) £5,000.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 23 March, *Official Report,* column *169,* about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will indicate for each of the contracts concerned the date of the certificate of practical completion.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the dates of the certificate of practical completion for each of the contracts concerned were:

(a) 22 January 1982;
(b) No specific date;
(c) 26 April 1982;
(d) 20 September 1983.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, on 23 March, *Official Report,* column *169,* about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will for each of the contracts concerned define the major points of claim.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the major points of claim for each of the contracts concerned were as follows:

(a) Alleged failure to give possession of site; delay and disruption; failure to measure and value; breach of contract.
(b) Alleged failure to give full vacant possession.
(c) Alleged delay in nomination; water damage; delay and disruption; repayment of liquidated damages.
(d) Alleged failure to give possession; delay and disruption; late nomination; failure to provide information; delays in payments; negligence; breach of contract.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, on 23 March, *Official Report,* column *169,* about the Housing Executive, regarding the four arbitrations referred to, he will for each of the contracts concerned indicate the actual date of final measurement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the actual dates of final measurement for each of the four contracts concerned were:-

(a) June 1983;
(b) March 1987;
(c) August 1983;
(d) October 1984.

Rowland Inquiry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* those recommendations of the Rowland inquiry which have not been put into effect.

Mr. Needham: *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* None.

Midwives

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of whole-time equivalent qualified midwives working in Northern Ireland *(a)* in hospital maternity units, *(b)* in special care baby units, *(c)* in education and *(d)* as community midwives.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

Whole-time equivalent (WTE) of qualified midwives

Year	*Hospital*[1]	*Education*	*Community*[2]
1981	841·17	20·75	116·20
1982	850·71	22·42	127·95
1983	858·52	23·00	132·21
1984	915·23	23·50	141·51
1985	907·80	23·75	143·24
1986	861·07	24·50	152·82
1987	877·20	25·33	169·10

[1] It is not possible to distinguish between midwives working in hospital maternity units and those working in special care baby

units.

[2] The WTE figure for community midwives includes 20 per cent. of the total WTE service provided by district/nurse midwives.

Baby Care Nurses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of whole-time equivalent nurses working in Northern Ireland in *(a)* hospital maternity units and *(b)* special care baby units.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* It has not been possible to distinguish between nurses working in hospital maternity units and special care baby units. The combined totals are as follows:

	Nurses
1981	..
1982	113,80
1983	108,47
1984	95,58
1985	115,15
1986	89,30
1987	100,52

.. = Not available.

DEFENCE

Exports (Value)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of British defence exports in 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total figures for the value of defence exports for 1987 are not yet available. We hope to publish them in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988.

21st Special Operations Squadron

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has to the date on which 21st Special Operations Squadron of the United States Air Force was activated; on what date it will become operational; what its role will be as declared to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; what British military facilities, other than RAF Woodbridge, are to be used by, or in support of, this unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The personnel and equipment of the unit which will be known as the United States Air Force 21st Special Operations Squadron are currently operational at RAF Woodbridge but the official designation of the new unit has yet to be formalised; the process is expected to be completed in June. The unit's role is to train and support United States Special Operations forces when deployed to the United Kingdom for operations in support of NATO by providing resupply and airlift. The helicopters of the squadron will also assume responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance as required. The squadron will be able to make use of the range of training and support facilities made available to United States forces stationed in the United Kingdom.

RAF Fighter Controllers (Training)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many simulators have been installed at United Kingdom air defence ground environment radar stations to provide interception control training for RAF fighter controllers; when each one was installed; and what plans exist to install further such simulators.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Four simulators have been installed at United Kingdom air defence ground environment operational units to provide interception control training for RAF fighter controllers. They were installed between 1974 and 1980.

The improved UKADGE is being equipped with a modern centralised interception control simulation facility, to which all RAF interceptor controllers will have access, in order to maintain operational standards.

Air Defence

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to hold the first exercise to practise the movement of United Kingdom air defence ground environment mobile radar convoys.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The first such exercise took place in 1985.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sites have been identified for the deployment of decoy radars as part of the United Kingdom air defence ground environment.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to give such details of operational plans.

Trial Radar Installation (Bradwell)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the trial radar installation near Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex.

Mr. Sainsbury: The facility near Bradwell-on-Sea was installed to investigate high-frequency, surface-wave radar technology.

Bistatic Radar

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the deployment of bistatic radar in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no firm plans for the deployment of bistatic radar in the United Kingdom.

Air Defence Ground Environmental System

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what slippage has occurred in the date of full operational capability for the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environmental system since 1977;

(2) what elements of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environmental system are already in operation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment system is being introduced into service progressively over a number of years, in accordance with a plan which takes account of the need to maintain a continuous operational capability as the transition from the old to the new is accomplished. Not surprisingly for a system involving as many complex elements as this, there has been some slippage; costs have, however, remained within the terms of the fixed or firm

price contracts under which the system has been developed. The bulk of the equipment has already been built and installed with some elements of the system already in service use. The remaining elements will be introduced into service during the next few years.

ALARM System

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the expected final cost of the anti-radiation missile system — ALARM; and when is the expected date of entry into service;

(2) what was the initial estimated cost of the anti-radiation missile system — ALARM; and what was the expected date of entry into service.

Mr. Sainsbury: At 1987-88 prices including VAT, the total cost of the ALARM missile system as estimated in 1983, at the time of the decision to procure it, was some £350 million; the current estimate is some £610 million, the great majority of which is represented by the fixed price contract recently announced. In 1983, the missile was expected to enter service in the late 1980s; on current plans it will do so in the early 1990s.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what lessons he has drawn for the process of decision-taking on procurement of missile systems from the process of choosing the anti-radiation missile system—ALARM;

(2) what anti-radiation missile system was originally sought by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Sainsbury: A study has recently been completed on the arrangements for managing major projects, such as ALARM, in the Procurement Executive. A copy of the report "Learning From Experience" was placed in the Library on 30 March. In addition, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 30 March, at column *466*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis).

As the House was told at the time, the decision taken in 1983 to buy ALARM in preference to HARM was not an easy one. Both options had advantages and disadvantages, and a wide range of complex factors had to be weighed. Both systems were operationally acceptable to the Royal Air Force. The process of evaluation and decision-taking was carried out with scrupulous care befitting the importance of the decision. The operational arguments were reviewed afresh last autumn and the clear conclusion was that ALARM was more suitable for the Royal Air Force's needs.

Chemical Defence Establishment (Soviet Scientists)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proposed visit of Soviet scientists to the Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I will make an announcement in due course.

Submarines (Faulty Welding)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking with VSEL in respect of the incorrectly welded unit in a Trafalgar class submarine in August 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: SSN hull units contain a slightly thicker section at the keel to provide an internal corrosion element. The incorrectly welded unit has been measured and found to contain a sufficient element for corrosion and it is therefore intended to leave the unit where it is presently positioned. The performance and life of the submarine will not be affected.

For the future, we shall be requiring VSEL to ensure that its quality control arrangements prevent such incidents happening again.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking on the VSEL report on Trident parts, lost off the Mull of Galloway and Walney Island on 5 to 6 February.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following the receipt of the report by VSEL in which the company identifies plans to put in hand a number of improvements to procedures, the Department is making arrangements to audit the implementation of these improvements.

Courtney Hill, Newry

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the six soldiers found hiding in an old school in the Courtney Hill area of Newry on 12 April were doing; why they were in plain clothes; why they were armed with pump action shotguns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I can confirm that four soldiers were in the building on 12 April. However, they were carrying out properly authorised duties, they were all in uniform and they were equipped with service issue weapons. It is not the practice to comment on the detail of operations.

Greenham Common

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what powers RAF Greenham Common was acquired and has been developed by his Department.

Mr. Freeman: RAF Greenham Common was first developed as a wartime airbase in 1941 on parts of Greenham and Crookham commons under the provisions of the Defence Regulations conferred by the Emergency Powers Act 1939. The then Secretary of State for Air acquired the freehold of Crookham common in 1955 and Greenham common in 1960.

The wartime Defence Regulations remained in force until 31 December 1958. Subsequent building work at RAF Greenham Common was then subject to the provisions of the Law of Property Act 1925, which lay down that consents are required from the Secretary of State for the Environment, over and above normal planning consultation, before building on land subject to rights of common. The rights of common at Greenham and Crookham commons are specific to a limited number of property owners and include rights to graze livestock and take gravel.

Although the normal planning procedures applying to Crown Land have been scrupulously observed, no consents under the Law of Property Act 1925 from the Secretary of State for the Environment have been sought by the Ministry of Defence since the lapse of the wartime Defence Regulations. Consequently, doubts about the legal position have been raised.

Additional facilities at RAF Greenham Common will be needed in connection with the inspection arrangements under the agreed verification regime once the INF treaty

is ratified. Steps therefore need to be taken to remove a legal obstacle to further construction which could impede this and other work.

It has therefore been decided that the appropriate course would be to negotiate fair compensation for the legal extinction of the commoners' rights which we propose to pursue under the provisions of the Defence Act 1854.

This matter is legally quite distinct from the question of the legality of the byelaws at RAF Greenham Common which has arisen as a result of the recent decision by the Reading Crown court, and has been raised in the House on 26 April 1988 at columns 190-91.

Ships (Lost Components)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answers of 15 February, *Official Report*, colunns *448-50*, what surveillance his Department exercises over Trident contractors, with particular reference to methods of transport used for delivering components and integral parts and the use of foreign-registered ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 February 1988]:* Trident contractors are subject to the same supervision as any other MOD suppliers, and the level of supervision is dependent on the security level of the equipment involved. The MOD instructions on security in industry included in these contracts permitted the use of foreign vessels for the transportation of this type of fabrication.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gulf War

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will initiate fresh moves through the United Nations designed to bring the Iran-Iraq war to an end; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have played a leading role as a permanent member of the Security Council to bring about a negotiated settlement to the Iran-Iraq conflict. We shall continue to do our utmost to support the United Nations Secretary General in his work to reach a settlement via United Nations Security Council resolution 598 and in such follow-up measures as may be necessary to achieve compliance with this mandatory resolution.

Polygraph Testing

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the wider introduction of polygraph testing as recommended by the Security Commission in 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Following completion of the first phase of the polygraph pilot scheme, an independent scientific study of the evidence about the validity of polygraphic techniques was commissioned. When the results of this study have been assessed, a decision will be taken on whether to proceed with the second phase of the pilot scheme. There are no plans for wider introduction of the polygraph.

Israel (Sanctions)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give consideration to the application of selective economic sanctions against Israel.

Mr. Mellor: Economic sanctions would not help bring about a solution of the problems of the region.

Falklands Fishing Zone

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the economic progress in the Falklands fishing zone.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated revenue to the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) from fishing licences and trans-shipping fees for the 1987-88 financial year is £18·65 million. In addition, Stanley Fisheries Limited has received joint venture premiums of £6·2 million. This income has provided a substantial boost to FIG revenues.

Intergovernmental Organisations

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list in the *Official Report* the intergovernmental organisations, excluding the European Communities, of which the United Kingdom is a member, the amount of the United Kingdom's annual contribution to each organisation, the percentage of each organisation's budget which this represents and which Government Department accounts for each contribution.

Mr. Eggar: The policy of this Government is identical to that of its predecessors: to meet our obligations to international organisations in full and on time. Assessed United Kingdom contributions are usually determined by reference to a pre-set scale of assessment which varies from one organisation to another. Voluntary contributions are determined by the Minister concerned.

For the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank group, the regional development banks and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, we seek equitable burden-sharing in the capital stock of each institution and in the soft fund replenishments.

Budgetary matters are discussed with other countries as appropriate.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on a report issued by the United States Department of Defence in autumn 1987 on the problems of safeguarding and physical security of plutonium in international commerce; and if this report has any implication for safeguarding and security arrangements for planned air freighting of plutonium from BNFL, Sellafield, to Japan.

Mr. Mellor: We are obtaining a copy of the report, and I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the delays in the application for

entry clearance of Mrs. T. A. (Islamabad immigration office ref. 1mm 90912) about whom the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member for Stretford on 7 March; if he will expedite consideration of this application; and if he will give details of the expected time at which it will be resolved.

Mr. Eggar: The background to this application was explained in my letter of 7 March 1988. Further information since received by the embassy in Islamabad necessitated the case being referred to the Home Office on 12 April 1988 for decision. My hon. Friend will write further on this.

Council of Ministers

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present nine meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for May.

At the EC/ASEAN meeting on 2-3 May, Ministers will discuss relations between the Community and ASEAN, and other international issues.

The Internal Market Council meets on 3 May to discuss measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 16-17 May to continue its discussions on the 1988 price-fixing proposals and to consider various proposals forming part of the programme for the completion of the single market.

The Education Council meets on 24 May to discuss the European dimension in education, a proposal to increase awareness of Community in schools; the transition of young people from education to adult and working life; education and the environment; teaching of foreign languages; medium-term priorities for education co-operation; and prospects for COMETT (a scheme to promote high technology cooperation between industry and universities) and ERASMUS (a scheme to encourage students to spend time at European universities).

The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 24-25 May. Discussions are expected to include the extension of the food aid framework regulation; preparation for the EC-Israel Co-operation Council; relations between the Community and the United States; progress made in negotiations with Hungary on a trade and co-operation agreement; implemention of the European Council conclusions on financing the Community; and dates for the 1989 European Parliamentary elections.

The Industry Council on 27 May is likely to hold preliminary discussions on the future of ECSC steel production quotas.

The Culture Council meets on 27 May to discuss priorities for further cultural co-operation at Community level and its implemention.

The Health Council will meet on 31 May to discuss progress on two draft directives under the cancer programme concerning labelling of tobacco products and tar yield; proposals for the collection of epidemiological data and the exchange of information on other measures concerning AIDS; a Commission report on toxicology; health aspects of medical technology and data processing; biotechnology; and the authorisation of proprietary medicinal products.

The Development Council will meet on 31 May. Ministers are expected to discuss a draft resolution on the economic situation and adjustment process in sub-Saharan Africa; the European volunteer service; a report on financial and technical cooperation with developing Asian and Latin American countries from 1976 to 1986 and UNGA's mid-term review of the critical situation in sub-Saharan Africa. The Council will also review the first year of the operation of COMPEX, the system for compensating less developed countries not signatory to the ACP-EEC convention for loss of export earnings; and progress on food strategies.

Foreign Diplomats

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by each diplomatic mission in London during 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested by my hon. Friend is given in the table. The table also includes those international organisations which have incurred unpaid fines. The figures may be reduced by late payment.

The total for 1987 (14,437) indicates a 35 per cent. reduction over the total 1986 figure (22,331) and is only 13 per cent. of the 1984 figure (108,845)—the last to be published before the introduction of our policy on parking by members of diplomatic missions in May 1985.

We welcome the further reduction in unpaid parking fines that has been achieved during 1987 and appreciate the co-operation of diplomatic missions since the introduction of the parking policy. We shall, however, continue to monitor carefully the level of unpaid fines, and bring pressure to bear on diplomatic missions to reduce this further.

	1987 Total	*First six months*	*Second six months*
Egypt	799	426	373
Soviet Union	622	271	351
China	551	245	306
France	513	481	32
Spain	435	271	164
Iraq	424	229	195
Qatar	413	178	235
Pakistan	394	251	143
Saudi Arabia	382	198	184
United Arab Emirates	358	233	125
Malaysia	329	201	128
Poland	329	150	179
Italy	302	187	115
Oman	295	253	42
Morocco	263	164	99
Greece	258	120	138
Turkey	254	103	151
Nigeria	251	88	163
Thailand	246	157	89
Sudan	236	116	120
Zimbabwe	223	150	73
Israel	216	116	100
India	207	104	103
Ghana	205	106	99
Sierra Leone	189	99	90
Kuwait	186	55	131
German Dem Rep	185	90	95
Iran	183	165	18
Algeria	172	91	81
Barbados	172	121	51
Portugal	170	111	59

	1987 Total	First six months	Second six months
Tunisia	166	114	52
Jordan	165	106	59
Cameroon	159	56	103
Peru	155	83	72
Japan	153	74	79
Zaire	150	79	71
Brazil	149	84	65
Korea	149	98	51
Cote d'Ivoire	138	44	94
Kenya	138	41	97
Canada	130	94	36
German Fed Rep	130	74	56
Brunei	127	79	48
Venezuela	116	52	64
Yugoslavia	104	51	53
Cyprus	96	55	41
Burma	88	59	29
Ethiopia	82	48	34
Finland	82	52	30
Bulgaria	80	40	40
Gabon	78	47	31
United States	77	60	17
Chile	76	49	27
Ireland	74	44	30
Bangladesh	71	34	37
Liberia	70	42	28
Jamaica	68	32	36
Indonesia	65	43	22
Norway	60	27	33
Zambia	60	29	31
Romania	59	35	24
Sweden	58	30	28
Belgium	57	36	21
Uruguay	55	37	18
Hungary	53	38	15
PDR Yemen	53	31	22
Iceland	51	28	23
Tanzania	48	26	22
Philippines	45	29	16
Yemen Arab Republic	44	20	24
Senegal	43	13	30
Guyana	42	17	25
Lebanon	41	30	11
Somalia	41	21	20
Uganda	41	19	22
Fiji	40	23	17
Czechoslovakia	38	22	16
Mexico	35	30	5
Paraguay	33	13	20
Trinidad	31	13	18
Botswana	29	13	16
Gambia	27	0	27
Cuba	26	8	18
Mauritius	25	11	14
Ecuador	24	8	16
Colombia	23	12	11
Panama	22	10	12
Costa Rica	20	13	7
Lesotho	19	4	15
South Africa	19	16	3
Togo	18	10	8
Honduras	16	5	11
Antigua and Barbuda	13	5	8
Austria	12	12	0
Nepal	10	6	4
Nicaragua	10	5	5
Seychelles	10	2	8
Afghanistan	8	6	2
Eastern Caribbean	8	5	3
Sri Lanka	8	6	2
Bahamas	7	6	1
Bahrain	6	3	3
Malawi	6	3	3
Netherlands	6	3	3
Bolivia	5	3	2
Denmark	5	0	5
Swaziland	5	3	2
Vietnam	4	2	2
Papua New Guinea	3	0	3
Dominica	2	1	1
Luxembourg	2	2	0
Singapore	2	2	0
Mongolia	1	0	1
Angola	0	0	0
Australia	0	0	0
El Salvador	0	0	0
Grenada	0	0	0
Guatemala	0	0	0
Holy See	0	0	0
Malta	0	0	0
New Zealand	0	0	0
Switzerland	0	0	0
Tonga	0	0	0
International Organisations			
Commonwealth Secretary	75	40	35
WEU	15	6	9
IMO	13	5	8
Cocoa	7	1	6
United Nations	0	0	0
EEC	0	0	0
Coffee	0	0	0
Inmarsat	0	0	0
Sugar	0	0	0
Total	14,437	8,068	6,369

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serious offences were allegedly committed in 1987 by persons entitled to diplomatic immunity; and how many foreign diplomats were withdrawn from their posts in Britain in that year as a result of alleged offences.

Mr. Eggar: Forty-three alleged serious offences by persons entitled to immunity were drawn to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1987. "Serious offences" are defined in accordance with the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee "The Abuse of Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges" (1985) as offences falling into a category which could in certain circumstances attract a penalty of six months or more; I am advised that very few of the alleged offences would have been likely to attract a custodial sentence. The majority involve drinking and driving and shoplifting. Eighteen diplomats were withdrawn from their posts in Britain in 1987 following alleged offences.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Allowances

Mr. Barron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of married couples who will stand to gain in 1990-91 from transferring the married couple's allowance to the wife.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 600,000 married couples are expected to benefit from transferring the married couple's allowance to the wife in 1990-91.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the value of income tax personal allowances has increased in real terms since 1979; how this amount has been distributed to each band of income taxpayers, both in total and in amount per taxpayer.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 30 March 1988]:* With the increases announced in the 1988 Budget, the single and married man's personal allowances will have increased by 26·5 per cent. and 27·6 per cent; respectively, in real terms since 1978-79. The table shows the cost of these increases, including those for age allowances and the average reductions in income tax liability for single people and married couples at different levels of income. All estimates are provisional.

Cost of real increases in personal allowances 1978-79 to 1988-89 at 1988-89 income levels and tax rates

Total income	Total cost			Gain per taxpayer		
	Single	Married couple	All	Single	Married couple	All
£	£ million	£ million	£ million	£	£	£
Under 5,000	390	50	440	120	130	120
5,000 to 10,000	650	580	1,240	140	220	170
10,000 to 15,000	260	910	1,170	150	270	230
15,000 to 20,000	70	720	780	140	300	270
20,000 to 30,000	50	660	710	190	330	310
30,000 to 50,000	20	270	290	250	380	370
Over 50,000	10	80	80	260	390	370
All	1,450	3,260	4,710	140	280	220

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reductions in income tax liabilities, at 1988-89 income levels, of the proposed 1988-89 allowances, thresholds and rates, and comparable figures for the 1978-79 regime indexed to 1988-89 showing *(a)* the number of tax units, *(b)* the total amount of reductions and *(c)* the average reduction per tax unit for the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of taxpayers and the bottom 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and 50 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 30 March 1988]:* The information is given in the table. I regret that information for the bottom 1 per cent. and the bottom 5 per cent. of taxpayers is not available. Child tax allowances, which were being phased out in 1978-79, have been excluded from the comparison. The estimates are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Reductions in Income Tax Liabilities in 1988-89 compared with the 1978-79 Indexed Tax Reigime

Point of income distribution [1] in 1988-89 Percentage	Number of units[2] paying tax in 1988-89 '000s	Total reduction in tax compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime £ million	Average[3] reduction in tax compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime £ per year
Top 1	210	4,740	22,680
Top 5	1,050	7,520	7,200
Top 10	2,090	9,410	4,500
Top 20	4,180	11,950	2,860
Bottom 10	2,090	380	120
Bottom 20	4,180	810	150
Bottom 50	10,450	3,310	290
All taxpayers	20,900	20,000	910

[1] Based on numbers of tax units expected to pay tax in 1988-89.
[2] Married couples count as one unit.
[3] Based on numbers of tax units liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime.

Net Earnings

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1988-89 the information on real net earnings provided in his reply of 10 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, columns *193-4*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information on real net earnings and average rates of tax and national insurance contributions is in the tables.

Income Tax and Income Tax + NIC as Percentages of Gross Earnings

	Multiples of average earnings				
	2/3	1	2	5	10
Single					
1956-57 Tax	10·4	16·6	24·8	40·5	55·2
Tax + NIC	14·0	18·9	26·0	41·0	55·4
1978-79 Tax	21·0	25·0	29·5	50·5	66·6
Tax + NIC	27·5	31·5	33·7	52·2	67·5
1988-89[1] Tax	17·3	19·9	24·5	33·8	36·9
Tax + NIC	26·3	28·9	30·1	36·1	38·0
Married					

	Multiples of average earnings				
	2/3	1	2	5	10
1956-57 Tax	5·1	11·2	22·0	38·9	54·2
Tax + NIC	8·6	13·5	23·1	39·4	54·4
1978-79 Tax	15·4	21·3	27·2	48·8	65·7
Tax + NIC	21·9	27·8	31·4	50·5	66·5
1988-89[1] Tax	12·9	17·0	22·2	32·9	36·4
Tax + NIC	21·9	26·0	27·8	35·1	37·6

Changes in Real Net Earnings after Income Tax and NIC (1956-57 = 100)

	Multiples of average earnings				
	2/3	1	2	5	10
Single					
1978-79	124·9	125·3	132·8	120·1	108·3
1988-89[1]	160·2	164·1	176·6	202·7	260·2
Married					
1978-79	126·8	123·9	132·4	121·1	109·0
1988-89[1]	159·9	160·3	175·8	200·2	256·4

[1] Provisional.

Child Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the gain to the Exchequer of taxing child benefit for taxpayers at the 40 per cent. tax rate in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue yield in 1988-89 from taxing child benefit at 40 per cent. for those married couples and single parents facing a marginal tax rate of 40 per cent. for that year is estimated to be about £140 million.

Walthamstow

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many top rate income tax payers there are in the Walthamstow constituency.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that the information is not available.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many BES schemes during each year of the scheme have sought to raise under £500,000, between £500,000 and £1 million, and between £1 million and £2 million.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is as follows:

Amount of investment per company	*Number of companies* 1983-84	1984-85	1985-86[1]	1986-87[1]
Less than £500,000	671	745	604	620
£500,000 to £1 million	32	33	30	27
£1 million to £2 million	8	17	18	9
Over £2 million	4	12	18	14
Total	715	807	670	670

[1] Provisional. Final figures are expected to be slightly higher.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on setting a maximum acceptable annual loss to the Exchequer from mortgage tax relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government remain committed to mortgage interest relief in helping people acquire their own homes. But relief remains confined to loans up to the loan relief limit, which is fixed each year and is currently £30,000.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of people applying for *(a)* one set of mortgage tax relief on a property, *(b)* two sets of mortgage tax relief on one property and *(c)* three or more sets of mortgage tax relief on a property in 1987-88 and the cost to the Exchequer of the tax relief on the mortgages in excess of one per property.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* In 1987-88 there are estimated to be a total of about 8·4 million tax units benefiting from mortgage interest relief. Although firm information is not available, it is tentatively estimated that about half a million of these tax units (excluding married couples) are involved in multiple borrower mortgages. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of this estimate between the number of tax units involved in mortgages with two unmarried sharers and those with more than two unmarried sharers.

The direct revenue cost in 1987-88 of the additional mortgage interest relief which is available to sharers is estimated to be of the order of £25 million.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the cost or saving to the Exchequer of *(a)* the changes to the mortgage tax relief given in the Budget and *(b)* limiting mortgage tax relief to £15,000 per person whether married or single.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* The estimated yields arising in 1988-89 and 1989-90 from the changes to mortgage interest tax relief which were proposed in the Budget are:

£ million

	1988-89	1989-90
Mortgage interest relief ceiling applied to residence	negligible	+25
Abolition of tax relief on new home improvement loans	+80	+200
Abolition of tax relief on new loans for homes for dependent relatives and divorced or separated spouses	negligible	negligible

It is estimated that the direct revenue yield in 1988-89 of the restriction of mortgage interest relief to a loan of up to £15,000 per individual would be about £320 million. This estimate is based on the mortgage interest rate of 10·25 per cent. prevailing at the beginning of 1988-89 and on the assumption that the new ceiling would apply to both existing and new loans. No account has been taken of any consequential changes to the distribution of mortgages.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most up-to-date estimate available on the inflationary effects of mortgage tax relief on house prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont: House prices are affected by a large number of factors including disposable income, the cost and availability of mortgage finance and changes in the number of households. I am not aware of any recent study which concentrates on the effect of mortgage interest relief.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most up-to-date estimate of the annual loss of revenue to the Exchequer as a result of mortgage tax relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue cost of mortgage tax relief in 1988-89 is estimated to be £4·25 billion. This estimate takes account of the recently announced reductions in the mortgage interest rate.

MIRAS

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the inclusion of housing co-operatives funded jointly by the housing corporation and a building society in the mortgage interest relief at source scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Loans to approved housing associations, including co-operatives, are already within the scope of the mortgage interest relief at source (MIRAS) scheme.

Disabled People's Homes (Tax Relief)

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the withdrawal of tax relief on interest on loans to adapt houses occupied by disabled people.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of representations have been received on the subject of abolition of tax relief on interest on home improvement loans including several about its possible effect on homes occupied by disabled people.

VAT

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any further information to add to that contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South, *Official Report*, 24 March, columns *195-6*, relating to the proposals of the Commission of the European Economic Community for extension of value added tax to specific goods or services hitherto exempt, together with the expected consequential yields to Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member's previous question related specifically to zero rated, not exempt, items. The Commission has successfully challenged before the European Court the legal basis of the exemption of certain medical care goods. Of these, the only item with appreciable revenue implications is the supply of spectacles, where taxation at the standard rate of 15 per cent. would yield around £25 million per year.

Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing tax and national insurance contributions less child benefit, where appropriate, for 1988-89, and comparable figures for 1987-88 and 1978-79, with the multiples of average earnings as half, two thirds, one, five and 10 times for *(a)* a married couple, with part-time working spouse, *(b)* a married couple plus two children, with part-time working spouse and *(c)* a single person.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 30 March 1988]:* Information on tax and national insurance contributions both at current prices and as a proportion of the appropriate multiple of average earnings is in the table.

The multiples of average earnings for single people and husbands are based on average earnings for men in all occupations paid at adult rates who work a full week and whose pay is unaffected by absence. For part-time working spouses, the level of earnings is the appropriate multiple of the average part-time wage for women recorded in the new earnings survey. The levels of earnings for 1988-89 are projections in accordance with the assumptions given to the Government Actuary for reviewing national insurance contributions in paragraph 3.02 of the Autumn Statement 1987; the estimates for 1988-89 are therefore provisional.

Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions[1]

	Multiple of average earnings[3]									
	½		¾		1		5		10	
	£ per week	As a per cent.[4] of earnings	£ per week	As a per cent.[4] of earnings	£ per week	As a per cent.[4] of earnings	£ per week	As a per cent.[4] of earnings	£ per week	As a per cent.[4] of earnings
Single person										
1978-79	10·90	23·6	17·10	27·5	29·30	31·5	242·50	52·2	626·80	67·5
1987-88	28·30	24·8	42·00	27·7	69·20	30·5	520·00	45·8	1,201·90	52·9
1988-89	29·10	23·8	42·90	26·3	70·70	28·9	441·10	36·1	930·50	38·0
Married couple with part-time working spouse and no children										
1978-79	7·40	12·5	14·70	18·5	29·40	24·6	286·30	48·0	728·20	61·1
1987-88	21·20	14·8	36·80	19·3	68·60	23·9	614·60	42·8	1,413·90	49·3
1988-89	21·90	14·2	37·90	18·4	70·00	22·7	535·30	34·7	1,135·90	36·9
Married couple plus two children with part-time working spouse[2]										
1978-79	1·10	1·9	8·30	10·4	22·90	19·2	278·30	46·7	719·90	60·4
1987-88	6·70	4·7	22·30	11·7	54·10	18·8	599·10	41·8	1,399·40	48·8
1988-89	7·40	4·8	23·40	11·4	55·50	18·0	520·80	33·8	1,121·40	36·4

[1] Assuming contracted in to the state earnings scheme.
[2] Less child benefit.
[3] Average earnings (£ per week) taken to be

	1978-79	1987-88	1988-89
Husbands and single people	92·9	227·3	244·7
Part-time working spouses	26·3	59·5	63·4

[4] Tax and national insurance as a proportion of earnings.

Budget

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify the distribution of gains in the Budget from each item where tax changes were made at other than normal indexation, according to income bands as follows: less than £5,000 per year; £5,000 to £7,500; £7,500 to £10,000; £10,000 to £12,500; £12,500 to £15,000; £15,000 to £20,000; £20,000 to £30,000; £30,000 to £50,000; and above £50,000; and if he will indicate the percentage of total tax changes accruing to each group and the percentage of the total numbers of taxpayers that each group comprises.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* The table shows the estimated change in income tax liability for individuals at 1988-89 levels of income resulting from the main Budget proposals compared with indexation of the 1987-88 income tax regime.

Reduction in income tax liability in 1988-89 compared with indexation of the 1987-88 income tax regime

Range of total income	Tax units[1] as a percentage of total liable to tax	Increase in personal allowances	Increase in basic rate limit	Reduction in basic rate	Abolition of higher rates above 40 per cent.	Budget proposals for allowances, rates and thresholds	
	per cent.	Amount £ million	Amount £ million	Amount £ million	Amount £ million	Amount £ million	As a percentage of total per cent.
Less than £5,000	12·2	70	—	50	—	120	2·0
£5,000 to £7,500	17·7	110	—	210	—	320	5·3
£7,500 to £10,000	15·9	110	—	300	—	410	6·8
£10,000 to £12,500	13·8	120	—	350	—	470	7·8
£12,500 to £15,000	10·9	100	—	350	—	450	7·4
£15,000 to £20,000	13·8	140	—	590	—	730	12·0
£20,000 to £30,000	10·9	130	40	710	10	890	14·7
£30,000 to £50,000	3·7	60	60	330	310	760	12·7
Above £50,000	1·1	20	20	110	1,750	1,900	31·3
TOTAL	100·0	860	120	3,000	2,070	6,050	100·0

[1] Counting married couples as one and combining their incomes. Under the Budget proposal it is estimated that 20·9 million tax units will pay tax in 1988-89.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1988 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 21 October 1986, to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *807-8*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West, *Official Report*, 25 January, columns *79-82*, regarding income gains and losses from successive Budgets, in the light of his latest budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* The information is in the tables. For each financial year shown, the tables compare the yield from the tax regime in that year with the 1978-79 tax regime. All the estimates are based on a provisional 1988-89 income base projected from the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and all tax regimes have been indexed to 1988-89 levels according to the statutory formula. The comparisons therefore allow

for budgetary changes in income tax since 1978-79 but not for changes in definition or any other factors which might affect the income base.

Reductions(+)/increase(−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

£ million

Range of total income in 1988-89 £	*Number units paying tax in 1988-89 (million)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Under 5,000	2·6	180	70	−280	−240	−30	90	190	220	280	400
5,000 to 10,000	7·0	1,050	600	−310	−210	310	650	960	1,230	1,760	2,490
10,000 to 15,000	5·2	1,380	1,000	200	290	740	1,120	1,420	1,780	2,510	3,430
15,000 to 20,000	2·9	1,130	850	320	380	690	970	1,170	1,470	2,080	2,810
20,000 to 30,000	2·3	1,510	1,230	500	590	1,020	1,360	1,550	1,910	2,620	3,510
30,000 to 50,000	0·8	1,350	1,170	620	680	990	1,280	1,380	1,530	1,820	2,580
50,000 to 70,000	0·1	680	620	440	460	560	700	720	740	780	1,250
Over 70,000	0·1	1,750	1,700	1,540	1,560	1,640	2,060	2,070	2,080	2,100	3,530
Total	20·9	9,010	7,220	3,020	3,510	5,910	8,220	9,470	10,960	13,940	20,000

Average gain/loss(−) per tax unit (£ per annum)

Range of total income in 1988-89 £	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
under 5,000[1]	50	20	−80	−70	−10	30	60	60	80	120
5,000 to 10,000[1]	150	80	−40	−30	40	90	130	170	240	350
10,000 to 15,000	270	190	40	60	140	220	270	340	480	660
15,000 to 20,000	390	300	110	130	240	340	410	510	720	980
20,000 to 30,000	660	540	220	260	450	600	680	840	1,150	1,540
30,000 to 50,000	1,740	1,500	800	870	1,270	1,650	1,770	1,970	2,340	3,310
50,000 to 70,000	4,990	4,560	3,240	3,380	4,120	5,150	5,290	5,440	5,740	9,160
over 70,000	18,620	18,090	16,380	16,600	17,450	21,910	22,020	22,130	22,340	37,550
Total	410	330	140	160	270	370	430	500	630	910

Note:
All information is in terms of tax units—that is married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.
[1] Average gains are calculated by reference to the estimated number would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime; this number is some 1,100,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1987-88, some 900,000 in the income range below £5,000 and 200,000 in the range £5,000 to £10,000.

Income Tax and Personal Allowances

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the gain to taxpayers at less than half, half to three-quarters, three-quarters to one, one to one and a half, one and a half to two, two to three, three to five and five to 10 and more than 10 times average earnings from the 2p cut in income tax and the rise in personal allowances; if he will specify these bands in pound sterling per year at current earnings; how many taxpayers are in each of these bands; and what percentage of the total number of taxpayers each group comprises.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* The table shows the total reductions in income tax liability for single people and married couples from the changes in personal allowances, the basic rate limit and the basic rate of income tax proposed in the 1988 Budget. The change in liability is in comparison with the 1987-88 tax regime indexed to 1988-89 levels. Incomes above the level corresponsing to five times average earnings have been combined into a single range to provide a more reliable estimate. Average earnings are those for full-time men in all occupations whose pay is unaffected by absence.

Reductions in income tax liability resulting from changes in allowances, the basic rate limit, and the basic rate in the 1988 Budget compared with indexation

Gross income in 1988-89		*Number of single people and married couples gaining*		
As a multiple of average earnings	*£ per year*	*'000s*	*Per cent. of total*	*£ million*[2]
Less than 0·5	less than 6,362	[1]4,700	22	270
0·5–1	6,362–12,724	8,240	39	1,090
1–1·5	12,724–19,087	4,530	21	1,020
1·5–2	19,087–25,449	2,060	10	690
2–3	25,449–38,173	1,150	5	590
3–5	38,173–63,622	360	2·5	220

Gross income in 1988-89		Number of single people and married couples gaining		
As a multiple of average earnings	£ per year	'000s	Per cent. of total	£ million[2]
over 5	over 63,622	120	0·5	80
	Total	21,150	100	3,980

[1] Includes 240,000 taken out of tax by increases in allowances.
[2] Total cost of reductions in full year.

Allowances and Reliefs

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the savings in a full year at 1988-89 rates of restricting all allowances and reliefs to the standard rate of tax; and if he will provide a breakdown by category of allowance and relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 April 1988]:* The direct revenue cost at 1988-89 levels of income of allowing personal tax allowances at rates in excess of the basic rate of income tax is estimated to be about £700 million. Information on the similar cost of other income tax reliefs is available only in respect of mortgage interest, retirement annuity premiums, employee's superannuation contributions, the business expansion scheme, and donations to charities; in total it is about £630 million. Within this total is a cost of about £280 million for mortgage interest relief and about £100 million for retirement annuity premiums. It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for the other individual reliefs. Nor is it possible to estimate precisely the combined yield from restricting these reliefs and personal allowances to the basic rate, but it is thought to be about £1,500 million. These estimates make no allowance for any possible behavioural effects if allowances and reliefs were to be restricted to the basic rate.

Married Couple's Allowance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the cost to the Exchequer in 1990-91 of allowing married couples the right to choose whether the husband or wife should have the married couple's allowance in their name; and if he will give the anticipated cost of the scheme as it is presently proposed;

(2) if he will estimate the number of married couples who would pay less tax under a system which permitted them to elect which partner receives the new married couple's allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 12 April 1988]:* In 1990-91 it is estimated that some 20,000 married couples where the wife is liable at the higher rate and the husband at the basic rate would benefit if they were allowed to elect which partner should receive the new married couple's allowance. Such a provision would cost approximately £5 million more than the independent taxation proposals in the Budget. For income tax, the revenue cost of these proposals in 1990-91 (based on the existing distribution of income and capital between husbands and wives) is estimated to be about £500 million.

Taxpayers (Statistics)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the number of higher rate taxpayers in 1986-87 and 1987-88 living in each Scotland, England and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* For countries the latest estimates of the number of higher rate taxpayers (married couples and single people) are for 1985-86 and are as follows:

	Thousands
Scotland	76
England	849
Wales	28

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the number of higher rate taxpayers in 1986-87 and 1987-88 living in each parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 April 1988]:* I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the tax liability in *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89 of a married couple where the husband is earning £23,000 a year, has the use of a 2300cc company car in which he does 2,400 miles on business annually, and makes £5,520 by sale of approved share options and where the wife earns £17,000 a year and has the use of a 1600cc company car in which she travels more than 2,500 miles annually, assuming that mortgage interest of £3,000 annually is paid by the husband and that the couple elect to be taxed separately on earned income.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* The income tax and capital gains liabilities of the married couple in 1987-88 and 1988-89 would be:

	1987-88 £	£988-89 £
Income tax	9,587·25	9,331·75
Capital gains tax	0	208·00
Total	9,487·25	9,539·75

The income tax liabilities shown are based on the assumptions that the married couple have no other forms of income or reliefs, that both company cars are under four years old and have an original market value of under £19,250 and that the wife drives between 2,500 and 18,000 miles on business travel in the year. The capital gains tax liabilities assume the husband makes a gain of £5,520 on the disposal of shares acquired under an approved share option scheme, that the couple make no other gains or losses in the year and that there is no indexation relief.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give figures following the tax changes announced in the Budget for the income tax and social security contributions as a percentage of gross income for a married couple with no dependent children on *(a)* £11,000, *(b)* £50,000 and *(c)* £75,000 a year making the same assumptions as used in the Inland Revenue publication "International Comparisons of Direct Tax on Employment Income" published in December 1987;

(2) if he will give figures following the tax changes announced in the Budget for the income tax, tax and social security contributions less child benefit, as a percentage of gross income for a married couple with two dependent children on *(a)* £11,000, *(b)* £50,000, and *(c)* £75,000 a year making the same assumptions as used in the Inland Revenue publication "International Comparisons of Direct Tax on Employment Income" published in December 1987;

(3) if he will give figures following the tax changes announced in the Budget for the income tax and social security contributions as a percentage of gross income for a single person on *(a)* £11,000, *(b)* £50,000, and *(c)* £75,000 a year making the same assumptions as used in the Inland Revenue publication "International Comparisons of Direct Tax on Employment Income" published in December 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 21 April 1988]:* The information is in the table.

Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions as a percentage of gross income, 1988-89

Annual earnings £	*Single person* per cent.	*Married couple with no children* per cent.	*Married couple with two children*[1] per cent.
11,000	28·1	24·7	17·8
50,000	35·0	33·8	32·3
75,000	36·6	35·9	34·8

[1] deducting child benefit.

The calculations assume that all income is earned income, that the wife has no earnings, and that there are no reliefs or allowances other than the appropriate personal allowance. National insurance contributions are at the standard class 1 rate for employees contracted-in to the state additional (earnings-related) pension scheme. Child benefit is deducted from income tax and national insurance contributions in the calculations for married couples with children takes into account cash benefits for children.

Political Parties

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of the political parties are currently treated by the Inland Revenue as qualifying political parties for the purposes of section 24 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 April 1988]:* The political parties which currently qualify are:

Conservative
Labour
Labour and Co-operative
Social and Liberal Democratic
Social Democratic
Scottish Nationalist
Plaid Cymru
Ulster Unionist
Democratic Unionist
Social Democratic and Labour

Budget (Gainers)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to establish a procedure for gainers from the recent Budget to refund part of their extra income to a public service of their own choosing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* No. Individuals are free to donate their own money to voluntary groups in areas where they would like to see extra spending; and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made tax relief available for payroll giving to charities in his 1986 Budget.

Pensions

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of the lack of prior notice to the pensions industry about the measures contained in clause 53 of the Finance Bill, he will issue a press notice stating whether he is considering any further change to pensions legislation before the 1 July implementation date for personal pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* All but one of the measures contained in clause 53 were announced on Budget day. But the proposal—which has been widely welcomed—to allow members of occupational schemes to contract-out of the state earnings-related pension scheme through a personal pension could not then be announced as it was still under discussion between my Department and the Department of Health and Social Security. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly be making consequential changes to social security regulations.

TRANSPORT

M1 Leagrave, Luton

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will consider the provision of a higher fence on the section of the M1 that passes through Leagrave, Luton, to counteract noise and pollution.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will consider the matter and then write to my hon. Friend.

InterCity

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the cost per mile of travel to InterCity rail users in 1987; and what was the cost in 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The figures for average fare per mile paid by InterCity passengers in the two years are as follows:

	Cash	*1987 prices*
1979	4·4p	7·9p
1987	7·9p	[1]7·9p

[1] provisional.

In real terms, fares were no higher in 1987 than 1979.

London City Airport

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide comprehensive and updated information on the proposed test flights by jet propelled aircraft from London City airport; what is the significance for future use by aircraft not yet able to use the airport by virtue of planning restrictions of definition of, or adjustments to, the public safety zones referred to in Departmental letter XQ/26/08 of 19 April; what is the approximate extent of the public safety zones described by grid co-ordinates attached to the letter; and what assessment *(a)* the Civil Aviation Authority and *(b)* his Department have made of the routes now used to and from the airport to Paris since resumption of flying in 1988.

Mr. Channon: Questions about test flights from London City airport (LCY) should be addressed to its owners John Mowlem plc.

The public safety zones (PSZs) at LCY extend outwards in a funnel shape for 600 m. from the end of the runways. At the eastern end, the PSZ co-ordinates take account of both the present runway and its possible extension. If planning permission were granted for an extension, the runway could physically accommodate a wider variety of aircraft than now.

The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for aviation safety regulation including (with the Ministry of Defence) air traffic management. The authority remains of the view that each of the routes identified by its panel of inquiry for use between London City airport and Paris is suitable for that purpose.

Radioactive Materials (Security)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will initiate an investigation into the present arrangements covering the transport on commercial aeroplanes of radioactive materials, in terms of special security measures against terrorist attack or hijack of the aircraft;

(2) what discussions he has had with the International Civil Aviation Organisation over the air transport of radioactive materials under the United Nations recommendations for the transport of dangerous goods, section 7, in terms of special protective measures against terrorist attack or hijack;

(3) if he has had any recent discussions with the International Civil Aviation Organisation over the adequacy of physical protection measures against aircraft hijack in the transport of dangerous goods under United Nations recommendations class 1, explosives, 2, gases, 3, flammable liquids, 4, flammable solids, 5, oxidising substances, 6, poisonous substances, 8, corrosives, and 9, miscellaneous dangerous goods.

Mr. David Mitchell: The International Civil Aviation Organisation already lays down international standards and recommended practices for the safeguarding of international civil aviation against acts of unlawful interference: these embrace measures to counter hijacks and terrorist attacks on Civil aviation. The United Kingdom's civil aviation security programme reflects these international standards, tailored as necessary to meet specific threats applying to the United Kingdom. We shall continue to keep these and other security matters under review within the relevant international bodies, as appropriate.

Radioactive Materials (Transport)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the Intertran and Radtran II computer codes developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency to model the radiological impact of the transport of nuclear materials.

Mr. David Mitchell: Intertran was developed from the American computer code Radtran-II by consultants working for the International Atomic Energy Agency. The safety and reliability directorate of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) has undertaken work on the code on behalf of UKAEA and the Department of Transport.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many events were recorded in the periods *(a)* 1964 to 1983 and *(b)* 1984 to 1987, in the transport of radioactive materials that either exceeded or had the potential to exceed the radiological impact associated with normal transport conditions.

Mr. David Mitchell: *(a)* Forty-two events recorded during this period involved radiation levels greater than those associated with normal transport conditions. But only 10 of them caused significant doses to the workers concerned, mostly from badly packaged industrial radiography equipment.

(b) The information for this period is not yet available.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the International Air Transport Authority over the current security measures to protect aircraft carrying radioactive materials from hijack.

Mr. David Mitchell: There have been no discussions with the International Air Transport Association (IATA). International development of civil aviation security standards is carried out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. The European civil aviation conference considers questions of aviation security in Europe and makes recommendations to its members. It is open to IATA to make representations to those international bodies.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the International Atomic Energy Agency over security measures for the air, sea or land transport of radioactive materials and physical protection measures against terrorist attack or hijack.

Mr. David Mitchell: The International Atomic Energy Agency already lays down recommendations on the standards for the physical protection of radioactive materials during transportation, and these standards are observed by the industry.

ENERGY

British Gas

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many shareholders in British Gas did not pay

the final instalment for their shares by the deadline on 26 April; and how much money was outstanding for these shares.

Mr. Parkinson: At close of business on 26 April payments from more than 97 per cent. of investors had already been processed, leaving some 80,000 to go. This represented 99 per cent. of the £1,590 million instalment value. Since 26 April payments have been arriving at the rate of roughly 10,000 a day. Payments are still being accepted but any investor who has not paid at this stage is running an increasing risk of losing his shares.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if Nirex has agreed to take responsibility for the disposal of radioactive wastes arising from the reprocessing of Swedish spent nuclear fuel currently stored at Sellafield.

Mr. Parkinson: Nirex is currently developing proposals for a deep repository for low and intermediate-level wastes. Acceptance of particular wastes will depend on contracts to be negotiated when a disposal facility is available. It is expected that Nirex will accept wastes arising from all United Kingdom sources, including Sellafield.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total volume of *(a)* low-level nuclear wastes, *(b)* intermediate-level nuclear wastes, *(c)* high-level nuclear wastes, *(d)* depleted uranium and *(e)* plutonium expected to arise from all contracts signed (i) before 1976 and (ii) since 1976 with Swedish companies for the storage and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield.

Mr. Parkinson: All BNFL's reprocessing contracts with Swedish companies for reprocessing at Sellafield were signed before 1976. The products that will be obtained from this reprocessing are estimated at:

(a) Low-level waste, 900 cubic metres.
(b) Intermediate-level waste, 140 cubic metres.
(c) High-level waste, 8 cubic metres.
(d) Uranium, 136 tonnes.
(e) Plutonium, 1 tonne.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the contracts signed before 1976 with Swedish companies for the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel cover the management and disposal costs arising for low and intermediate-level nuclear wastes.

Mr. Parkinson: Contracts signed before 1976 with Swedish companies, in common with all contracts signed before 1976, for the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel do not include options for the return of waste. All these contracts therefore cover the management and disposal costs in respect of the wastes arising from them.

Nuclear Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all current international civil nuclear research projects in which the United Kingdom has involvement either in direct co-operation with other states or through involvement via multinational bodies; what financial commitment has been made in each year since the United Kingdom co-operation began; and if he will make a statement on present prospects for each collaborative project.

Mr. Parkinson: United Kingdom bodies participate in the collaborative programmes of the International Atomic Energy Authority, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Nuclear Energy Agency, and Euratom. They also take part in a number of multinational and bilateral research projects. Details of this participation cannot be assembled without disproportionate cost.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what volumes of *(a)* low and *(b)* intermediate-level radioactive wastes are expected to arise from contracts currently signed for the thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP) at Sellafield; and what plans exist for the nuclear waste arising from these contracts.

Mr. Parkinson: The likely arisings from BNFL's existing THORP reprocessing contracts are:

(a) Low-level waste, 40,000 cubic metres.
(b) Intermediate-level waste, 6,000 cubic metres.

For wastes arising from pre-1976 contracts the low-level waste will be disposed of to Drigg and the intermediate-level waste will be sent to a United Kingdom repository. All post-1976 contracts include an option for the return of wastes, and we intend that this option should be exercised.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the contracts signed with *(a)* the Italian nuclear authorities and *(b)* the Japanese nuclear authorities for the management of spent nuclear fuel at Sellafield from the Latina and Tokai Mura magnox reactors, respectively, is designated to cover (i) the disposal of low and intermediate level wastes and (ii) high-level waste arising.

Mr. Parkinson: 60 per cent. of contracts for the management of spent nuclear fuel from Latina and 55 per cent. of the contracts for the management of spent nuclear fuel from Tokai Mura cover disposal in respect of the wastes arising. The remaining contracts were all signed after 1976 and include options for the return of wastes arising. The Government intend that these options should be exercised.

Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the consultation document on the proposed legislation on coal mining subsidence compensation to be issued.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Energy has today issued a consultation document to interested parties. This sets out proposals for coalmining subsidence legislation following the publication on 29 October 1987 of the White Paper in reply to the Waddilove report on "The Repair and Compensation System for Coal Mining Subsidence" (Cm. 235).

Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

SOCIAL SERVICES

RAWP Levels

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by what percentage the RAWP levels of the Thames regional health authorities require to be uplifted to compensate for the treatment of acute patients in private hospitals.

Mr. Newton: I am not entirely clear what my hon. Friend has in mind; but the possibility of taking private provision into account in the RAWP formula was rejected on practical grounds in the interim report on the review of the RAWP formula published in December 1986.

NHS Budget

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the percentage of the National Health Service budget raised by *(a)* general taxation, *(b)* national insurance contributions and *(c)* charges in each of the last 30 years.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

NHS Sources of Finance—Percentage of Total by Year

Financial year	*Consolidated Fund*	*NHS contributions*	*Charges*	*Miscellaneous*
1957-58	85·0	9·5	5·3	0·3
1958-59	80·3	14·4	5·0	0·3
1959-60	80·4	14·5	4·9	0·3
1960-61	81·9	13·3	4·5	0·2
1961-62	77·7	16·5	5·6	0·2
1962-63	77·1	17·2	5·5	0·2
1963-64	77·9	16·4	5·4	0·3
1964-65	79·6	15·0	5·1	0·4
1965-66	83·8	13·3	2·6	0·2
1966-67	84·8	12·4	2·4	0·3
1967-68	86·5	10·9	2·3	0·3
1968-69	84·8	11·8	3·1	0·3
1969-70	85·9	10·3	3·5	0·3
1970-71	85·8	10·8	3·2	0·3
1971-72	85·7	10·3	3·6	0·5
1972-73	87·0	9·0	3·6	0·4
1973-74	88·1	7·9	3·5	0·5
1974-75	91·3	5·7	2·6	0·4
1975-76	89·2	8·5	2·0	0·3
1976-77	88·0	9·7	2·1	0·2
1977-78	88·0	9·6	2·1	0·3
1978-79	88·0	9·6	2·1	0·3
1979-80	88·0	9·5	2·2	0·3
1980-81	89·1	8·2	2·4	0·3
1981-82	87·8	9·4	2·5	0·3
1982-83	85·7	11·3	2·7	0·3
1983-84	85·8	11·0	2·8	0·4
1984-85	85·6	11·1	2·8	0·5
1985-86	85·6	11·0	2·7	0·7
1986-87[1]	84·6	11·6	2·9	0·9
1987-88[1]	83·1	13·2	2·8	0·9

[1] Estimated.

Operating Theatres

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on studies carried out on the usage of operating theatres in National Health Service hospitals by Peat Marwick McLintock; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that Peat Marwick McLintock has undertaken such studies on behalf of some health authorities. The studies were funded from the health authorities' resources since they dealt with problems identified locally. Any reports produced are confidential to the commissioning authority and are not released to the Department without their agreement. This is part of the professional relationship which exists between client and consultant.

Energy Saving

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why the Treasury guidelines for contracts with energy management companies offering energy-saving investment to health service establishments on a shared energy-saving basis and financed by the private sector, have still not been issued to regional and district health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: The joint Treasury-Department of Energy guidelines on the use of contract energy management were issued to regional health authority treasurers on an informal basis in November 1987. The Department hopes to issue formal guidance on this subject as soon as possible.

Consultants

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of consultants in paediatric dentistry, by regional health authority for 1983 and 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The latest available information is set out in the table. Staffing of hospital departments is a matter for health authorities in the light of their plans for the development of services.

Table: Consultants in paediatric dentistry in England: numbers as at 30 September

Region	*1983*	*1986*
Northern	—	—
Yorkshire	1	1
Trent	—	—
East Anglian	—	—
North West Thames	1	1
North East Thames	—	1
South East Thames	—	3
South West Thames	1	1
Wessex	—	—
Oxford	—	—
South Western	—	—
West Midlands	—	—
Mersey	—	3
North Western	—	2
SHAs for the London PG teaching hospitals	4	5
England total	7	17

Residential Homes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year from 1979 to 1987 *(a)* the number of places in (i) private, (ii) voluntary and (iii) local authority residential homes for elderly people; *(b)* the number of places for elderly people in independent, voluntary and private, homes supported by supplementary benefit payments, *(c)* the total supplementary benefit expenditure in £million on supporting people in independent residential care for the elderly and *(d)* the average expenditure per person supported in independent residential care for the elderly.

Mrs. Currie: The available information on the number of places in residential care homes for elderly people is as follows:

England as at 31 March	*Local Authority Homes*	*Voluntary Homes*	*Private Homes*
1985	102,534	26,402	73,606
1986	101,466	25,566	86,925

Separate data on residential homes for elderly people only are not available prior to 1985. Further information

on residential accommodation for elderly and younger disabled people for the years 1979-1986 is contained in the Department's publications "Residential Accommodation for the Elderly and for Younger Physically Handicapped People Local Authority Supported Residents — RA/86/1" and "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People — RA/86/2", copies of which are available in the Library.

Separate information on supplementary benefit for people in independent residential care homes for elderly people has been available only since 1985. There were 35,200 claimants in such homes at May 1985, 48,900 at May 1986 and 61,600 at May 1987.

Separate information on total expenditure and average payments to people in these homes is not available. Figures relating to all supplementary benefit claimants in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes were published in "Public Support for Residential Care" (the report of a joint central and local government working party), a copy of which is in the Library. Comparable figures for May 1987 are 117,000 claimants, receiving average payments of £104·6 (at February 1986 prices) with a total expenditure of £671 million.

Family Credit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if full-time participants on the new adult training scheme who have one or more children will be eligible for family credit.

Mr. Scott: Participation in the new adult training programme will not satisfy the family credit qualifying condition of remunerative work. Family credit could be payable, however, if the trainee's partner worked for 24 hours a week or more.

Abortions

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list *(a)* the interval between each previous abortion performed for resident women in 1986 who have had (i) one, (ii) two, (iii) three, (iv) four or (v) five previous abortions, *(b)* the interval between each previous abortion performed for non-resident women in 1986 who have had (1) one, (2) two, (3) three, (4) four or (5) five previous abortions and *(c)* the ages of the women on the occasion of each abortion performed.

Mr. Newton: The abortion notification form asks for the number of previous abortions under the Abortion Act 1967 and the date of the last abortion, where applicable. There is no feasible method of linking notification forms in respect of women who have had more than one previous abortion. Thus, the only interval available is that between the current and previous abortion, and I regret that this can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Joan Chapman (Mobility Allowance)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the date by which a decision will be reached by the Department's mobility allowance unit at Norcross, Blackpool, in the case of Mrs. Joan Chapman of 16 Windsor Court, Lichfield, Staffordshire.

Mr. Scott: A decision was made, and Mrs. Chapman was notified of it, on 20 April.

Opren

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has given to the medical profession regarding the reasons for the withdrawal of Opren's product licence; and if advice was given on the side effects that were thought to be associated with the drug and the periods of time for which they might last.

Mr. Newton: All doctors and pharmacists were sent a letter from the chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines following the suspension of the product licence for Opren on 4 August 1982, giving the reasons for this action and advice. The letter drew attention to the numbers and types of reaction associated with Opren which had been reported, but not their duration. A copy of the letter is in the Library.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek advice from his medical advisers as to whether there are any circumstances in which they would recommend that Opren be prescribed for individual patients now that its product licence has been withdrawn.

Mr. Newton: Individual doctors in consultation with their patients are best placed to decide what should be prescribed in individual cases.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis the sum of £5 million has been set aside for funding the Independent Living Fund in 1988-89; and what proportion of this sum he expects to be expended on *(a)* administration and *(b)* publicity.

Mr. Scott: The sum actually allocated to the Independent Living Fund will depend on the number of applicants meeting the eligibility criteria. The £5 million which has been set aside for the fund initially represents our estimate of the maximum likely expenditure by the fund. Administration costs will depend on the volume of applications received. The level of expenditure on publicity once the fund is operational will be a matter for the trustees.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether payments from the Independent Living Fund to individuals will be made on *(a)* a weekly or *(b)* a monthly basis.

Mr. Scott: The method and frequency of payments from the Independent Living Fund will be a matter for the trustees to determine.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what account he expects the trustees of the Independent Living Fund to take of regional variations in costs and prices when assessing the levels of payments from the fund.

Mr. Scott: In determining the level of payments from the Independent Living Fund I would expect the trustees to have regard to the actual cost to individual applicants of employing personal care or domestic assistance.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to give details of the campaign to publicise the Independent Living Fund; and what is his assessment of the current level of awareness of its existence amongst potential claimants.

Mr. Scott: We are proposing to mount a publicity campaign to coincide with the formal launch of the fund, and advertising consultants have been briefed to develop this. A press release was issued on 31 March giving an address for potential applicants and others interested in the fund to write to. To date some 100 inquiries from individuals, voluntary organisations and those professionally involved with disabled people have been received at this address.

In addition the role of the fund has been brought to the attention of the Department's regional organisation. I also understand that information about the fund is being circulated to all citizens' advice bureaux. The level of inquiries received at this early stage indicates that many potential applicants are already aware of the fund's existence and purpose.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what categories of people will be appointed as trustees of the Independent Living Fund; who will administer the fund on a day-to-day basis; and what qualifications they will have to assess individual claims for disablement benefit.

Mr. Scott: Those appointed as trustees of the Independent Living Fund will be chosen to represent a whole range of appropriate qualities and interests. In particular, they will include individuals with special knowledge and experience of disability, and people from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is envisaged that the day-to-day administration of the fund will be delegated to the trust's administrative staff, acting according to the trustees' instructions. Borderline cases are likely to be referred to the trustees for guidance where necessary. I would expect the trustees and their staff to take appropriate professional advice on all cases. In addition, the Disablement Income Group and the Department will be available to advise the fund if required.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, columns *5-6*, what right of appeal or review there will be in respect of decisions on applications for payments from the Independent Living Fund in the period before the trust is formally established; when he expects the trustees to be in a position to determine how to deal with cases which have been turned down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No payments can formally be made from the Independent Living Fund before its legal establishment. All applications addressed to the fund now will be examined by officials, with professional advice, and the case for interim payments considered. All applications will, however, be fully re-examined by the trustees when appointed, whether or not interim payments have been made.

Drug Licences

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what restrictions there are on the prescribing on a named person basis of a drug which has had its product licence withdrawn; if his Department or the Committee on Safety of Medicines is advised each time it occurs; and what warnings the prescribing doctor is obliged to give to the patient.

Mr. Newton: The Department places no restrictions on the prescribing of drugs by doctors on a named patient basis. Medical practitioners are responsible for treating and advising their patients. Neither the Department nor the Committee on Safety of Medicines is normally advised when a drug is prescribed on a named patient basis.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that whenever a drug licence is withdrawn, members of the medical profession are given the facts which led to its withdrawal so that they will be aware of the risks involved if they decide to prescribe it on a named person basis and the long-term side effects which may affect their patients.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 November 1987 at column *560*.

Project 2000

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the Government's response to "Project 2000: A New Preparation for Practice" published by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation, and we have been considering them in the light of it. We hope to respond to the UKCC shortly.

Nurses (Immunisation)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy in regard to charging nurses for immunisation against hepatitis B and other diseases to which they may become exposed in the course of their work; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Immunisation against hepatitis B and other infectious diseases, which is offered for occupational health reasons to those in high risk groups, is provided free of charge.

Mental Handicap Nurses

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what training facilities are available in the London area for mental handicap nurses (RNMH).

Mr. Newton: The schools of nursing which have approval to run ENB course 1200 RNMH, Registered Nurse for the Mentally Handicapped, in the London area are:

Waltham Forest.
Newham.
Enfield and Harringay.

There is a wide range of post-basic courses available to mental handicap nurses, as well as other in-service training. The hon. Member may wish to contact the regional chairmen concerned for further information.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines his Department has given to district general managers and health regions to enable them to fulfil Government assurances about the long-term future for mental handicap nurses in the community care setting.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 16 March, at column *615*.

"From Black to White"

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if all the treatment shown in the recent postgraduate dental video entitled "From Black to White" will be available through the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: All treatment necessary for dental fitness is available under the NHS general dental services. The scale of fees for general dental practitioners, which is reviewed annually in consultation with representatives of the dental profession, already includes payment for the treatment of the early signs of tooth decay using the techniques shown in the video. We will shortly be discussing with the profession whether any clarification of the description of this treatment in the scale is needed in the light of developments in clinical practice.

Dental Estimate Forms

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what arrangements he made to distribute the new dental estimate forms; and if he is satisfied that sufficient supplies of the new forms were available on the appropriate date;

(2) what arrangements he made to inform general dental practitioners of the changes consequent on the introduction of new dental estimate forms; if any special arrangements were made to inform dental receptionists about the use of these forms; if he issued any separate instructions on advising people on low incomes in their use, in particular in relation to form AG; and whether he has made any plans to issue advice to patients on the completing of these forms.

Mrs. Currie: Guidance concerning the revised procedures for remission of dental charges on grounds of low income which came into effect on 11 April, and supplies of the new estimate forms were sent well in advance of that date to each family practitioner committee for distribution to general dental practitioners. I have no reason to believe that practitioners did not receive them by 11 April. Practitioners are responsible for training their staff in new procedures. Advice on completion of form AG1 is contained in the form itself. The form also indicates where further information can be obtained.

Ross Lab (Product Licence)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the application about which the hon. Member for Macclesfield has written to him made by Ross Lab of Macclesfield for the issuing of a product licence in connection with blood transfusion equipment was first received by his Department; what stage that application has reached; when he expects the licence to be issued; what have been the reasons for the delay in processing the application; and if he will make a statement outlining what steps he is taking to establish the sources of information given to competitors of Ross Lab about the progress of the application.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information concerning the state of progress of applications for product licences made under the Medicines Act is regarded as confidential. Details will be given in the reply to the letter from my hon. Friend.

Lithotripters

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list by health district those health authorities which have a lithotripter, giving the cost of purchase and estimated annual running costs, together with how many people are treated on average each year, the date the machine was installed and the population of health districts where this equipment is sited.

Mrs. Currie: There are two types of lithotripter in current use in National Health Service hospitals. The first type, percutaneous lithotripters, are designed for invasive internal application in a normal operating theatre. These are relatively inexpensive devices which are in widespread use.

The second type, known as the extra corporeal shock wave lithotripter, is a complex and expensive machine which avoids the need for interventional surgery. Ministers have said that this type of lithotripsy should be a regional service. I am aware of five of these lithotripters in use so far within the National Health Service in England. These are located as follows:

The Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
St. Peter's Hospital, London
St. Thomas's Hospital, London
Southmead Hospital, Bristol
Withington Hospital, Manchester

There are also facilities in Scotland, which are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and in the private sector.

The detailed information requested is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the health authorities concerned to obtain it.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total sum spent nationally on research into Alzheimer's disease during 1986-87 and 1987-88 and projected for 1988-89.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

The main agency through which the Government support medical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives a grant-in-aid from this Department.

I understand that in 1986-87, the last financial year for which figures are available, the Medical Research Council spent in the region of £3 million in its own establishments and through grants to universities on research related to Alzheimer's disease. Expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89 is likely to be at about the same level. Some expenditure is also incurred by universities from general funds.

Expenditure on research into Alzheimer's disease, funded directly and indirectly by the Health Departments for 1986-87, is about £70,000.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 May 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil Justice Review

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects the civil justice review to be published, pursuant to his statement of 16 December, *Official Report*, column 1212.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor received the report of the civil justice review on 28 April. He has given instructions for the report to be printed and will present it to Parliament as soon as possible. It is expected that this will be early in June.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, in the light of his proposals to privatise the electricity supply industry, he will issue a direction to the Central Electricity Generating Board to withdraw all its formal applications for the construction of new power stations under section 2 of the Electric Lighting Act 1909, until such time as the future pattern of the industry has been settled.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Until new legislation is brought forward and passed by Parliament, the Central Electricity Generating Board continues to have a statutory obligation to supply. It therefore remains its responsibility to plan sufficient generating capacity to meet the need for electricity in England and Wales.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Lesotho

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current development projects in Lesotho for which United Kingdom national, Commonwealth or European Community assistance is given and the value of that assistance.

Mr. Chris Patten: Under the bilateral aid programme to Lesotho, Britain is currently financing the following projects at a total cost of £8·078 million:

Project	*£ million*
Village Water Supplies	1·475
Rural sanitation	0·223
Maseru sewerage	0·444
Maseru urban sanitation	0·588
Forestry	1·006
Government Computer Centre	0·530
National Development Corporation Line of Credit	1·126
Road Improvement Unit	2·624
Mabote Site and Services	0·034
Livestock Improvement Centres	0·028

In addition we expect to spend about £2·4 million in 1988-89 on technical co-operation activities. The Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation is currently funding with grants estimated at £153,000 a number of projects in Lesotho involving the provision of experts. Projects in Lesotho currently being financed by the European Community from the fifth and sixth European development funds are as follows:

	Total cost £ million
(a) Grants	
Mekaling-Quthing road	6·76
Mohale's Hoek-Mekaling road	3·65
Mphaki Area Development II	2·55
Asparagus expansion scheme	3·28
Highlands water scheme	6·55
Manpower development programme	5·31
Levotholi Polytechnic	0·41
Lesotho Airways Corporation	1·48
Lesotho Customs services	0·09
Institute of Public Administration	0·31
Studies (irrigation, agricultural water supply, health, finance, vet services)	0·43
(b) Special loans	
Mohale's Hoek-Mekaling road	6·07
Mekaling-Quthing road	0·35
(c) Risk Capital	
Lesotho National Development Corporation	2·07
Highlands water scheme	2·41
	41·72

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom contributions to Lesotho through national, Commonwealth and European Community action in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: United Kingdom bilateral aid expenditure and the estimated British share of Commonwealth and European Community aid expenditure to Lesotho since 1983 have been as follows:

£000s

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom bilateral aid	4,695	5,233	2,382	3,784
Estimated United Kingdom share of European Community aid	840	1,300	1,340	950
Estimated United Kingdom share of Commonwealth aid[1]	80	37	30	46

[1] Figures cover the period June-July.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what measures he has taken, or proposes to take, to assist the Lesotho Government to strengthen their national economy and decrease their dependence on the economy of the Republic of South Africa;

(2) if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the role of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference as an agency for diminishing Lesotho's economic dependence on the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: All our bilateral aid to Lesotho aims to strengthen the national economy. In addition we support the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference, of which Lesotho is a member.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment is available to him of Lesotho's repayment of foreign debt; and to which countries repayment has not been made.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures in the table show the debt service payments which were due and estimates of the actual payments made on public and publicly guaranteed debt from 1984 to 1987. I am not aware of any countries which have failed to receive repayments due from Lesotho.

Debt Service Payments $US millions

	Due	*Paid*
1984	20	21
1985	18	18
1986	12	14
1987	13	13

Source: World Bank World Debt Tables and IMF Staff Papers.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment is available to him on the level of economic growth in Lesotho in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: The rate of economic growth in Lesotho as measured by the estimated growth in the gross domestic product is as follows for each year since 1983.

Percentage growth rate of GDP

	Per cent.
1984	9·4
1985	3·8
1986	2·2
1987	2·8

Source: IMF Staff Papers.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the extent to which Lesotho has benefited from joining the Lomé convention and been given improved access to European Community markets.

Mr. Chris Patten: Over the five years to 1990 Lesotho will get 41 million ecu (about £28 million) in planned aid from the European development fund, in addition to benefiting from SADCC and other regional projects. Lesotho also receives lending from the European Investment Bank, finance under the Stabex scheme, and emergency aid.

Under the Lomé convention, Lesotho's exports of its industrial products and the great majority of its agricultural products enter the Community free of tariff or other restrictions.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

London (Specialist and Support Services)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what feasibility studies were carried out before hand on the extent to which successor authorities to the Inner London education authority would be able to run specialist and support services and employ special advisers in the event of abolition.

Mrs. Rumbold: In putting forward their proposals, the Government took account of the fact that outer London and other metropolitan borough authorities maintain services such as those referred to by the hon. Member. Detailed discussions on such services will clarify any further work required to ensure continuity.

School Governors

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities which are providing training courses for school governors at public expense.

Mr. Dunn: A survey conducted recently on behalf of the Department suggested that most local education authorities provide some school governor training. Section 57 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 places on every local education authority to provide every school governor with such training as the authority considers necessary for the effective discharge of the governor's functions. This duty will take effect from 1 September 1988 for county and maintained special schools, and 1 September 1989 for voluntary schools.

Police-School Liaison

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken on the recommendations of the joint teachers' association, Police Federation working party report on police — school liaison.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government welcome co-operation between the teaching profession and the police as reflected in this report. Liaison between police and schools is important not only for education itself, but also for the prevention of crime and for maintaining the essential relationship of trust and confidence between the police and the public.

The report covers very similar grounds to that covered by a report produced jointly by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Society of Education Officers in 1986. The Government circulated this report to all schools and police forces. Both the Home Office and the Department of Education and Science have worked in hand to identify and disseminate examples of good practice in police-schools liaison. The Home Office is financing a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of various methods of police-schools liaison and Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools has begun an examination of good practice in a number of local education authorities.

The arrangements for police-schools liaison need to be developed locally. We understand that since the publication of the 1986 report local working parties have been set up in many areas to develop joint police-schools programmes.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations are currently taking place with teachers and local education authorities on pay increases.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend wrote on 19 April to the local authority associations, the teacher unions and

bodies representing the interests of the governors of voluntary schools setting out his proposal to implement the recommendations on pay rates of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions. This letter invited the consultees to say if they would like a meeting with him or with officials, such meetings to take place by 13 May. A number of such meetings have been arranged.

Education Expenditure (Kirklees)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the expenditure per pupil for primary and secondary schools in Kirklees metropolitan council area for each year from 1982 to the present date.

Mr. Dunn: The net institutional recurrent expenditure per pupil by Kirklees local education authority in primary and secondary schools in the years 1981-82 to 1986-87, the latest date for which actual data is available, is set out in the table:

Expenditure[1] per pupil in Kirklees—1981-82 to 1986-87

	Primary £	*Secondary* £
1981-82	590	780
1982-83	650	855
1983-84	675	880
1984-85	720	960
1985-86	785	1,055
1986-87	875	1,250

[1] Net Institutional recurrent expenditure covers the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.

Note: All figures are in cash terms.

PRIME MINISTER

Advertising

Mr. Blair: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish a list of advertising contracts awarded by the Government in respect of the advertising programmes by the Government for the financial year 1987-88.

The Prime Minister: The following agencies were approved to work on the following campaigns contracted through the Central Office of Information for the financial year 1987-88.

Agencies	*Campaigns*
Collett Dickenson Pearce and Partners Limited	Crime Prevention Prison Office Recruitment Electoral Register Koestler Awards Absent Voters Army Officer Recruitment British Nationality Act Rolls Royce Flotation
Collett Dickenson Pearce and Partners Ltd.—Financial	Small Business Advisers Data Subjects Offshore Supplies Office
Slaymaker Cowley White /BDG Ltd.	Army—Other Ranks Police Recruitment
George Hynes and Partners (Ireland) Ltd.	Army—Northern Ireland
Young and Rubicam Ltd.	Navy Recruitment
FCO Limited	Fire Prevention Jobshare Job Release
Waldron Allen Henry and Thompson	Anti Car Tax Evasion Road Safety/Drink and Drive
DDB Needham Worldwide	Road Construction Taxi sharing Zeebrugge Disaster Rabies Prevention Farming and the Countryside Association of Drainage Authorities Companies Registration Office National Engineering Laboratory Patents Office Queen's Award Transonic Wind Tunnel Small Firms Merit Awards The Cuba Desk Campaign Towards Integration National Engineering Laboratory Seminars National Physical Laboratory Custom Silicon King's Cross Disaster CB Radio Licence Evasion
J. Walter Thompson Company Limited	Recruitment—Air Force BAA flotation Now's the time to export
Yellowhammer Advertising Company Limited	Employ the Unemployed Job Club
Davidson Pearce Limited	Action for Jobs Career Loans
Gold Greenlees Trott Advertising Limited	The Employment Service Enterprise Allowance Scheme
Dorland Advertising Limited	Mobile Tax Centre Campaign Reforms Information Pack Income Support Maternity Benefit Family Credit Pensions National Insurance Uprating Working with Drug Users Widows Benefit Housing Benefit Winter Warmth Funeral Grants Anti Smoking Special Payments Dental Charges Recruitment—Customs Officers
Saatchi and Saatchi Advertising	Youth Training Scheme Community Programme
Dewe Rogerson Limited	British Gas Flotation 2nd Call BP Flotation
TBWA Limited	Nurse Recruitment AIDS Blood Donor Recruitment
Benton and Bowles Recruitment Limited	Teaching as a Career

Agencies	*Campaigns*
Leo Burnett Limited	Job Training Scheme
Ayer Barker Limited	Financial Services Act
WCRS Mathews Marcantonio	National Training Award Corporate Advertising
WBH Advertising Limited	Training Courses Fit for Work Sheltered Employment Procurement and Consultancy Service Job Centres

Mr. Blair: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish by Government Departments the latest estimate of expenditure on advertising for the financial years 1978-79 to 1987-88 and the forecast, if any, for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90, giving in each case a breakdown of advertising in *(a)* television and *(b)* elsewhere.

The Prime Minister: Information on publicity costs, including advertising, is not held centrally except where the expenditure incurred was through the Central Office of Information.

Expenditure on advertising for the year 1978-79 through COI on behalf of Government Departments was £18·8 million.

Details of departmental expenditure on publicity, including advertising, for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 were supplied by Ministers in response to questions from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and published in the *Official Report* November-December 1986, July 1987 and December 1987-January 1988.

Forecasts for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are a matter for individual Ministers and are not available centrally.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Prime Minister if the press offices of Government Departments are involved in the preparation of Government advertisements.

The Prime Minister: The deployment of staff in Government Departments is a matter for the Ministers in charge of the Departments.

Departmental Correspondence

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of the leak inquiry relating to the exchange of information between Mr. Paul Gray of her private office and the office of the Secretary of State for the Environment, concerning the poll tax and housing benefit.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 14 March 1988 at column *425*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of the investigation into the unauthorised disclosure of a memorandum from her office to the Secretary of State for Scotland on the issue of opting out in Scottish school board legislation.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my reply of 15 April to the hon. Member at column *254*.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister when the news media were informed of her intended visit to the Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children.

The Prime Minister: In the normal way, the press was informed shortly before the visit took place.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister why she did not inform the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras about her recent official visit to Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children; on what date the visit was decided upon; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is my consistent practice to inform any Member of a visit to his or her constituency shortly before the visit is due to take place. It has not, however, been my practice to do so when the visit is in the central London area. I have been hoping to visit Great Ormond street for some time.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the estimated cost to public funds of her visit to the Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children.

The Prime Minister: The costs of visits of this nature are not readily identifiable.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government have refused to fund fully the refurbishment of the Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are planning to commit over £27 million to this scheme. It was agreed with the trustees at the outset that private funds would play a major part in the development. This is entirely consistent with Government policy and I welcome the generosity and commitment already shown by industry, commerce and the general public.

Strathclyde (Educational Changes)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting between Professor Brian Griffiths and parents in Strathclyde about educational changes.

The Prime Minister: Professor Griffiths, the head of my policy unit, like the other members of the unit, meets a wide variety of people in the course of his work. It is not my normal practice to comment on any such specific discussions.

Rail Travel

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions since May 1979 she has travelled by train while engaged on official business.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 14 April 1988 column *219*. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on 22 April 1988 column *583*, I travelled by train in February 1987.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters she has received regarding the changes in social security; and to how many she has replied to date.

The Prime Minister: I have received many such letters, from right hon. and hon. Members and others. Replies are sent as soon as possible. Some are transferred to the Department of Health and Social Security because they require details of personal cases and fall within the responsibility of that Department.

Office Staff

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister how many civil servants in her office are engaged on a regular basis in preparation for Prime Minister's Question Time.

The Prime Minister: A number of officials in my office are engaged in preparation for Question Time, in addition to their other responsibilities.

Civil Servants (Press Briefings)

Mr. John: To ask the Prime Minister if she will, pursuant to the answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *97*, to the hon. Member for Pontypridd on the criteria governing civil servant press briefings, investigate the circumstances in which Mrs. Elizabeth Attridge and Mr. Grant Meaking of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food came to hold a press briefing on 21 April dealing with an Opposition research document, in the light of the criteria for the political neutrality of civil servants; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am advised that no such press briefing has taken place. If, during the course of briefings given for declared reasons, journalists ask for comments on criticisms of the Departments' handling of a particular matter, factual answers will be given.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Firms

14. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from small firms following the Budget proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Small firms have welcomed the changes announced recently in the Budget. In particular the reductions in rates of personal taxation represent a further encouragement to the strong and expanding small firms sector.

33. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the small firms service.

Mr. Cope: The small firms service, through its information and counselling arms, works to promote the growth of viable and profitable small businesses, and is increasingly developing its help to established businesses. In 1987-88, in England, it handled more than 266,000 inquiries and gave 39,138 counselling sessions. Inner city businesses are receiving extra help with the establishment in 1988 of six new inner city offices and the recruitment of specialist business advisers. The service's annual report for 1987-88 is planned for publication in the summer.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The latest estimates show that the employed labour force in Great Britain numbered 24,654,000 in December 1987. The employed labour force has now risen for 19 successive quarters, and by more than half a million in the last year alone.

19. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage increase in unemployment since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: Between May 1979 and March 1988 the seasonally adjusted level of adult unemployment increased by 117 per cent. on a consistent basis. However, since July 1986 unemployment has been falling. It is now 2,504,800 the lowest figure since December 1981.

21. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in employment levels in the south-west since 1983.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest estimates show that the civilian employed labour force in the south-west region increased by 121,000 between December 1983 and December 1987.

22. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the most recent percentage unemployment figure in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Lee: The unemployment rate in the European Community was 10·4 per cent. seasonally adjusted, in February 1988.

28. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many more people are employed in East Anglia currently than in 1983.

Mr. Lee: By December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian employed labour force in East Anglia had increased by 159,000 compared with December 1983. The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed.

32. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the disparities between male and female unemployment in various parliamentary constituencies, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Daventry of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *371*.

Mr. Lee: The level of both male and female unemployment varies with local labour market conditions, but the variations tend to be more marked among men than among women. Therefore, there are local variations in the ratios of female to male unemployment.

36. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present level of unemployment in the west midlands, and what was the figure 12 months ago.

38. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on levels of unemployment in the west midlands.

Mr. Lee: On 10 March 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the west midlands region, seasonally adjusted and excluding school leavers, was 254,800. This is a fall of 61,300 since March 1987 when the comparable figure was 316,000, nearly 20 per cent. lower.

40. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the comparable current unemployment levels in the United Kingdom and other Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Following is the information for all the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation countries for which standardised unemployment rates are available.

International unemployment rates[1], seasonally adjusted

	per cent.	*Latest month*
Australia	7·4	February
Belgium	10·4	February
Canada	7·8	February
Denmark[2]	5·7	February
Finland	5·1	February
France	10·6	February
Germany	6·5	January
Greece[2]	7·4	April 1987
Ireland[2]	19·0	February
Italy[2]	11·3	February
Japan	2·7	January
Luxembourg[2]	3·0	February
Netherlands	9·6	February
Norway	2·2	November
Portugal	6·8	August
Spain	19·6	November
Sweden	1·6	February
United States	5·6	February
United Kingdom	9·0	February

[1] OECD standardised unemployment rates except where otherwise stated.

[2] Harmonised unemployment rates published by the Statistical Office of the European Community.

43. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for unemployment throughout the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: On 10 March 1988 seasonally adjusted adult unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,504,800—a fall of 27,800 since February and the lowest figure, on a consistent basis, since December 1981.

46. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the ratio of unemployed claimants to unfilled vacancies in jobcentres, using current measurement criteria, in *(a)* May 1979 and *(b)* the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: Vacancy figures are not available, on a consistent basis, for May 1979. The earliest available figures, January 1980 are given in the table, together with the March 1988 figures. The figures are on a consistent basis with current definitions. It is not meaningful to calculate a ratio of unemployment claimants to unfilled vacancies at jobcentres, since only about a third of all vacancies in the economy are notified to jobcentres.

	United Kingdom	
	January 1980	*March 1988*
Unfilled Vacancies (seasonally adjusted)	193,400	245,500
Unemployment Claimants (seasonally adjusted excluding school-leavers)	1,141,200	2,504,800

47. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he intends to take to promote equal opportunities for the deaf in the new adult training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: All training agents and training managers in employment training will be required to have an effective equal opportunities policy. The individual assessment available to everyone in employment training will help to identify whether any additional help is needed for people who have hearing difficulties to enable them to participate fully in the programme. Depending on identified needs, extra assistance could include a communicator service, the loan of special equipment, and the possibility of a supplementary grant for training managers for higher cost training.

51. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of the fall in unemployment in the last 12 months in Yorkshire and Humberside.

58. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of persons unemployed in Yorkshire and Humberside; and how this figure compares with the position 12 months ago.

Mr. Lee: In March 1988 seasonally adjusted adult unemployment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region was 243,400; a fall of 50,100, over 17 per cent. lower than a year ago.

56. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently in employment in the United Kingdom.

67. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on current trends in employment levels in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the employed labour force in the United Kingdom was 25,200,000. This is an increase of 501,000 since December 1986. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

61. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed in the north-east region of England; what were the comparable figures 12 months ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information is taken from the September 1984 census of employment. There were then 882,700 employees in employment, excluding self-employed people and members of Her Majesty's forces, in the north-east region of England. More comprehensive and up-to-date employment statistics can be provided for the standard economic regions. These show that in December 1987, the civilian employed labour force in the northern region was 1,209,000. The figure for 1986 was 1,193,000. The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed.

63. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in south Yorkshire.

Mr. Lee: In March 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the county of South Yorkshire was 88,220, a fall of 13,930 or 13·6 per cent. since March 1987.

66. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many long-term unemployed people there were in June 1983 and in March 1988; and what assessment he has made of their employment prospects for the next year.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment figures are analysed only by duration quarterly. On 14 January 1988 (the latest available date) the number of unemployed claimants who had been unemployed for one year or more in the United Kingdom was 1,100,615. The figure for July 1983 was 1,050,431. The comparison is affected by changes in the coverage of the count. Long-term unemployment has fallen by 234,000 over the last 12 months, the largest fall on record.

69. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in the north-west; what was the comparable level 12 months ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In March 1988, the level of seasonally-adjusted adult unemployment in the north-west region was 347,800, compared with 413,000 in March 1987, a fall of almost 16 per cent. over the last 12 months.

75. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the number of jobs lost in the Rotherham-Mexborough travel-to-work area during the last six months; what specifically is the number of jobs lost in the last few days at the Swinton glassworks; and what is the number of full-time vacancies at the present time.

Mr. John Lee: The information on jobs lost in the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area, for the period requested, is not available.

Information given to the Department under the redundancy provisions of the Employment Protection Act 1975 and the redundancy provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 is given in confidence and remains confidential until made public by the company concerned. On 4 March 1988 the number of full-time unfilled vacancies at jobcentres covering an area closely corresponding to the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area was 325.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

16. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Lee: Since the enterprise allowance scheme began in 1982, just over 333,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own business. 110,000 places will be available during the current year.

YTS

17. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of YTS.

Mr. Norman Fowler: Two-year YTS was introduced in April 1986 and the programme is now firmly established as the major route from school to work, providing training for around 60 per cent. of all 16 and 17-year-old entrants to the labour market. Three quarters of all young people leaving YTS go into a job, full-time education or further training.

25. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for YTS trainees going into work or further education and training.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission conducts regular follow-up surveys of all YTS leavers. The latest results show that 75 per cent. of young people who left YTS schemes betweeen April 1986 and October 1987, were in work, further education or training at the time of the survey.

29. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently on YTS training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: At the end of March 1988 the Manpower Services Commission management information system shows some 389,000 in training on YTS. This figure represents an impressive achievement in convincing young people the value of training. It also represents significant progress towards our objective that all young people under 18 years of age should have the opportunity either to continue in full-time education or of entering a period of work experience combined with work-related training and education.

73. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of YTS participants leave the scheme with a recognised qualification.

Mr. Cope: Until recently, as a result of the conversion to two-year YTS, 90 per cent. of leavers were early leavers and therefore not representative. Most young people will not have completed their two-year training programme until after March 1988. A national survey of those trainees who have stayed into their second year shows that 54 per cent. have already gained a qualification, and that a significantly higher proportion will have entered for a qualification by the end of their second year.

Channel Tunnel

18. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what forecast he has on the growth of inbound Channel tourism following the construction of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Numbers of visitors to this country from the rest of Europe have been rising, and in 1987 reached the record number of 9·3 million. While the opening of the Channel tunnel is bound to encourage further growth, it is not possible to forecast how many of the 15 million expected travellers using the tunnel in 1993—the first year of operation—will be incoming.

MSC Training Schemes

20. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently on Manpower Services Commission training schemes.

Mr. Fowler: In March 1988 there were some 390,000 young people on YTS and 30,000 people on the new job training scheme.

Single European Market

23. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress he has made in his assessment of the likely impact upon employment and registered unemployment of the completion of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Nicholls: This Department welcomes moves towards the completion of the single market. It is actively considering the likely effects of completion upon the United Kingdom labour market.

Business in the Community

24. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the target teams for the inner cities set up by Business in the Community.

Mr. Nicholls: This Department and the Manpower Services Commission welcome the formation of the eight inner city target teams and will continue to work closely with Business in the Community.

Disabled People (Travel and Tourism Course)

26. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if there are any plans to expand the number of places on the travel and tourism course for the disabled sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Lee: Manpower Services Commission-supported travel and tourism courses respond to local needs and as with their programmes for unemployed people generally, account is taken of the specific needs of disabled people locally.

The Manpower Services Commission's area office at Taunton currently supports a 14-place course in travel and tourism at the Hotel Careers Centre, Bournemouth. One of the trainees is a disabled person.

A further travel and tourism course is planned at Bournemouth. It will begin on 23 May, and offers a further 14 places.

Jobcentres

27. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries were made at jobcentres concerning job vacancies in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: We do not have precise information for 1987. However, I would expect the total to be broadly similar to the 19 million inquiries recorded in 1985-86, the last year for which comprehensive information is available.

Job Clubs

30. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of job clubs.

Mr. Lee: The job club programme has made significant progress over the last 18 months. At 31 March 1988 a total of 1,204 job clubs were open, compared with only 254 in October 1986. The number of people helped in 1986-87 was 25,695. In 1987-88 the number helped rose to 105,677 of which 57,080 (54 per cent.) went into jobs and a further 14,521 (14 per cent.) went into training, the community programme or enterprise allowance scheme.

Engineering (Higher Education)

31. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Engineering Council's proposals in its discussion document "Restructuring of Engineering Higher Education", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Cope: This Government welcome the discussion document as a focus for debate on this important area, and I have referred it to the Manpower Services Commission who will be commenting in the near future.

Tourism

34. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much Britain has received in European Community grants for tourism-related projects over the last three years.

Mr. Lee: Over the last three calendar years (1985 to 1987) tourism and tourism-related projects in England have received nearly £70 million in infrastructure grants from the European regional development fund.

39. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many overseas visitors came to London in 1987; and how much they spent.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated by the London tourist board that there were 9 million overnight visits to London by overseas residents in 1987, spending £3·7 billion during the period they stayed in London.

65. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the relationship between tourism and jobs in rural areas.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board calculates that in 1986 a total of £3,000 million was spent by visitors to the countryside, with much of this revenue going to local shops, pubs, hotels, restaurants and attractions thereby helping to support rural jobs.

The English tourist board anticipates a growth in rural tourism of 20 to 25 per cent. by 1992 with jobs in rural areas also increasing.

Disabled People (Employment)

35. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to monitor the employment progress of disabled people, in particular through the new adult training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: A wide range of information will be collected on the identity and progress of participants in employment training including those separately identified as having a disability. Data will be available from their referral to a training agent for assessment and through the stages of action on the agreed training programme to their exit from employment training into a range of possible outcomes.

"Training for Employment"

37. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received following the publication of Cm. 316, "Training for Employment", and if he will make a statement.

62. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the White Paper "Training for Employment"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about our important and ambitious proposals contained in the White Paper "Training for Employment".

76. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implications for deaf people of the White Paper "Training for Employment".

Mr. Nicholls: The new adult programme employment training will provide quality training for all eligible participants including those with hearing difficulties. All organisations participating in employment training will be required to have an effective equal opportunity policy. Trainees with hearing difficulties will have access to the full range of opportunities with, as necessary, additional help through a communicator service, loans for special equipment and the possibility of supplementary funding for training managers for parts of their training programme that would be particularly expensive.

Skill Shortages

41. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about proposals to deal with skill shortages.

Mr. Cope: The strength of our economy means that some employers are finding it more difficult to meet some of their skills needs through recruitment. Employers can improve the supply of skills they need by providing the proper incentives for individuals to acquire the right skills and experience and by stepping up investment in training.

We have given a lead by expanding our investment in training to around £3 billion in 1989-90 from £458 million in 1979-80. YTS guarantees up to two years' training for 16 and 17-year-old school leavers and the new £1·4 billion employment training programme will provide unemployed adults with the skills which today's jobs demand.

The Manpower Services Commission is also continuing to develop its programmes to encourage employers to recognise and meet their own training needs.

Training Commission

42. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Training Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State frequently meets the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, which will be renamed the Training Commission subject to the Employment Bill 1988 receiving Royal Assent. He will, of course, continue to meet the commission chairman to discuss training issues.

Adult Training

44. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of the adult training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Manpower Services Commission is well advanced in its development work for employment training which is to be introduced from 5 September. MSC offficials will shortly be providing detailed information to existing providers and others interested in taking part.

74. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the special arrangements being made for disabled people and those with special needs under the new adult training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on Tuesday 29 March, *Official Report*, column *414*.

78. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if special schemes for disabled people on the new adult training programme will be available at the assessment stage.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes. The special help schemes for people with disabilities will be available at all stages of employment training, including the assessment stage.

School leavers

45. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many school leavers are expected to come onto the job market in each of the next five years; and how that compares with the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: It is projected that 510,000 school leavers in the academic year 1988-89 will be available for employment in Great Britain and that the corresponding numbers for the following two years will be 480,000 and 460,000. Projections for later years are not yet available. The latest year for which estimates are available is the 1984-85 academic year. An estimated 620,000 young people leaving school in that year were available for employment.

Self-employment

48. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have become self-employed since 1 January 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Between December 1982 and December 1987 there was an estimated net increase of 727,000 in the number of self-employed people in Great Britain.

Hotels and Restaurants (Training)

49. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to encourage the success of the hotal and restaurant trainee placement scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of over 10,000 training placements for trainees in hotel and catering occupations is currently available under the YTS and the new job training scheme. The Hotel and Catering training board has expressed interest in increasing the number of training placements available to adult trainees by participating in employment training, which commences in September.

Enterprise in Higher Education

50. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the Manpower Services Commission's enterprise in higher education initiative.

Mr. Cope: I have been most encouraged by the amount of interest shown by institutions: 85 outline bids were received. Up to 10 projects will be selected for support in 1988-89.

Trade Union Reform

52. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on current Government plans for trade union reform.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Bill, which received its Third Reading in another place on 25 April, contains the Government's current proposals for changes in trade union law.

Unemployment Benefit Offices

53. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed in unemployment benefit offices at the present time; and how many were employed three years ago.

Mr. Lee: Staff employed in unemployment benefit offices are included with Department of Employment (DE) regional staff in our departmental staff record system. The staff in post figures for DE regional staff for 1 April 1988 and 1 April 1985 are as follows:

	Number
(i) Staff-in-post as at 1 April 1985	27,049
(ii) Staff-in-post as at 1 April 1988	28,546

Casual staff (usually taken on for a limited period to do a particular job) have not been included. And part-time staff have been counted as whole units. Figures differentiating between staff working in regional offices and those in unemployment benefit offices could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Wages Council Orders

54. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been issued to jobcentres about advertising vacancies for jobs which are subject to wages council orders.

Mr. Lee: Jobcentres have instructions that, where vacancies are notified for occupations affected by wages orders. Rates must not be less than those specified. Staff are advised not to display vacancies offering wages below the minimum level and to consult the wages inspectorate in cases of doubt.

Health and Safety at Work

55. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to announce any new initiatives to improve health and safety at work.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission and its executive currently have a number of initiatives under way to improve health and safety at work. I expect the commission to submit proposals for future action to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State later this year.

70. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will undertake a review of the extent of employers' compliance with the requirement under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act to publish and keep up to date a safety policy for their firm.

Mr. Nicholls: No. I am satisfied that the inspection measures described in the reply I have to the hon. Member on Monday 18 January 1988, *Official Report*, column *509*, are adequate to monitor the extent of compliance with this requirement.

Action for Cities

57. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received following the launching of the action for cities initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Since the launch of the action for cities programme on 7 March 1988 this Department and the Manpower Services Commission have been taking forward the various initiatives that were announced. There has been a high level of interest from the private sector in the new initiatives. A large number of inquiries have been received from companies, employer groups and other organisations about the schools-industry compacts initiative. A number of possible projects have been identified for potential support under the local enterprise agency project scheme. Support has also been expressed for the new small firms service office in Sheffield.

This interest is being sustained by the programme of action for cities working breakfasts, in which this Department is closely involved. These aim to stimulate further private sector involvement in inner city regeneration.

Restart Programme

59. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many long-term unemployed have been offered help under the restart programme since its inception.

Mr. Lee: Since 1 July 1985, some 3·5 million interviews have taken place under the restart programme, of which just under 90 per cent. have resulted in an offer of positive help being made.

EC Internal Market (Social Dialogue)

60. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of meetings which have taken place between his Department and trade unions, as part of the social dialogue recommended by the European Commission in order to consider the implications of the creation of the EEC internal market by 1992.

Mr. Cope: There have been no such meetings between this Department and trade unions. The social dialogue consists of discussions between the two sides of industry and is currently conducted at a European level.

International Conferences

64. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is Britain's share of the world market for international conferences and association meetings.

Mr. Lee: In 1986 (the most recent year for which figures are available) Great Britain had 9 per cent. of the world market for international conferences and association meetings.

Factory Inspectorate

68. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the criteria in terms of size, equipment, number of employees and other factors, which determine whether the factory inspectorate visits a factory, and the interval between visits.

Mr. Nicholls: All factories registered with the Health and Safety Executive are subject to inspection, regardless of size, equipment and number of employees. The factors taken into account in determining when an inspector visits a factory include the factory inspectorate's system of priority assessment for preventive inspection, required remedial action following an earlier visit, an incident, a complaint, necessary special inquiries or a request for advice by the management. There is no fixed period between inspections.

Single Union Agreements

71. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to promote single union agreements in industry.

Mr. Nicholls: It is for individual employers to decide which unions, if any, they wish to recognise. This is not a matter in which the Government can usefully intervene.

Non-statutory Training Organisations

72. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions are being made, in light of recent critical reports, to improve non-statutory training organisations.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 29 March 1988, *Official Report*, column *412*.

Catering

77. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the numbers employed in the catering industry, broken down by the categories of hospitals, armed forces, school, institutional and industrial catering.

Mr. Lee: Figures are not available for the categories specified. The latest available information, which is for December 1987, is as follows:

	Employees in employment
Hotels and catering	1,077,000
Of which:	
Restaurants, snack bars, cafes etc.	230,000
Public houses and bars	286,000
Night clubs and licensed clubs	155,000
Canteens and messes	136,000
Hotel trade	257,000
Other tourist etc. accommodation[1]	13,000

[1] This estimate is subject to considerable potential estimation error due to the relatively small number of employees in the industry.
Note: The figures are unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

Rowntree plc

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the employment implications of the bids by Jacobs Suchard and Nestlé Ltd. for Rowntree plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Under the Fair Trading Act 1972 the Director General of Fair Trading has a duty to advise my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether a merger or prospective merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation. The director general takes into account all matters which may raise questions of public interest including any likely significant employment effects of the merger or prospective merger.

Community Programme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions his Department has made for additional funding to be made available for those projects in the community programme which may be unable to generate the funding necessary to meet the costs of the management team salaries and running costs, following the changes in the Manpower Services Commission community programme due to come into force on 5 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The funding arrangements for employment training were set out in the White Paper "Training for Employment" (Cm. 316). Higher cost training places, including places on projects carried over from the community programme may attract a supplementary grant of up to £40 a week.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received concerning the impending changes in the Manpower Services Commission community programme criteria, due to take place on 5 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme and our other provision for unemployed adults will be replaced by employment training from 5 September. My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about these important proposals to provide quality training for longer-term unemployed people.

ACAS

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to receive the annual report of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. Fowler: I have received the ACAS report for 1987, which will be laid before both Houses of Parliament tomorrow. The report is also to be published tomorrow and copies will then be available from the Vote Office.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Substitute Teachers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many substitute teachers were

employed in primary schools in each of the education and library boards in Northern Ireland in each academic year from 1980-81 to 1987-88.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the full-time teacher equivalent based on the number of days for which salary was paid to substitute teachers in primary schools in the financial year 1987-88 (the only year for which figures are available) is as follows:

	Number
Belfast	105
North-Eastern	116
South-Eastern	109
Southern	125
Western	112

Housing Executive

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of certificates of work completed in Housing Executive contracts were paid at the date due under the contract conditions during 1986-87; and how many payments were delayed beyond that date.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those recommendations of the Housing Executive committee set up as a result of the Rowland inquiry which have not yet been put into practice.

Mr. Needham: None.

Cross-border Police Investigations

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will raise in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference the question of police investigations by the Garda Siochána and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in each other's jurisdiction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* We have regularly discussed a wide range of security matters in the Intergovernmental Conference, and will continue to do so. Details of proceedings are generally confidential, except as they are recorded in joint statements issued after each meeting.

Kincora Boys Home

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Mr. Peter Bell, currently working at the Northern Ireland Office, was interviewed in respect of any of the investigations into the Kincora boys home.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 25 February 1988 at column *322*.

Foreign Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the total costs incurred by his Department on foreign travel during the financial year 1987-88 identified by *(a)* ministerial travel and *(b)* travel abroad by civil servants.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

	£
Ministerial travel	35,282
Civil Servants	[1]1,946,799

[1] This figure includes some domestic travel costs by the Department of Economic Development.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British National Space Centre

Mr. Gerald Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what is the current level of investment in the British National Space Centre and the space-related industry; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the current investment through the European Space Agency in projects Polar Platform and Radarsat of the British Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The British National Space Centre (BNSC) co-ordinates a civil space budget of some £120 million per annum. About £80 million of this is spent through the European Space Agency (ESA) on areas of activity in which United Kingdom companies and organisations participate. The remainder funds national and other programmes. The British space-related industry therefore benefits both directly and indirectly from the Government's total expenditure on civil space.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 18 April, at columns *350-51*, to my hon. Friends the Members for Corby (Mr. Powell) and for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), which gave details of the Government's investment in the ESA polar platform and the Canadian Radarsat.

Consarc Calcarb

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department has authorised Consarc Calcarb to export equipment and technology necessary to manufacture fibrous carbon bonded thermal insulation to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is the Department's general practice not to comment on individual cases. No licences to export to the USSR such insulating material or the technology to manufacture it have been granted to any company since controls were introduced in November 1986.

Land Rover

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, pursuant to his answer of 20 April, *Official Report* column *436*, he will state what criteria were used to establish the difference between military and paramilitary versions of the Land Rover and basic versions when considering export licence requirements for South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: All arms and other military and paramilitary equipment and appliances described in group I of part II of schedule I of the Export of Goods (Control)

Order 1987 (SI 1987 No. 2070) require a licence for export to any destination except as provided in article 4 of that order. This includes vehicles specially designed for military or paramilitary purposes, or incorporating features specially designed for such purposes.

Departmental Television Advertising

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total cost to public funds of *(a)* the current television advertising campaign for the single European market and *(b)* the current television advertising campaign for the enterprise initiative scheme.

Mr. Butcher: The estimated cost of the current DTI television advertising campaigns are as follows:

	£
Single European Market	3·8 million
Enterprise Initiative	5·6 million

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total annual expenditure by his Department on television advertising campaigns, approved for broadcast by the IBA for each year since 1979 to the current financial year.

Mr. Butcher: The annual expenditure on TV advertising by the Department of Trade and Industry and its predecessor Departments since 1979-80 is as follows:

	£
1979-80	—
1980-81	—
1981-82	—
1982-83	729,934
1983-84	192,486
1984-85	31,635
1985-86	—
1986-87	—
1987-88	5,570,016

Budget allocations for television advertising during 1988-89 are still under discussion.

Ariane V

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the funding of Ariane V projects in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have received representations from a number of sources about funding of Ariane V projects in the United Kingdom.

Ariane V should provide a competitive satellite launcher in the mid-1990s to which the United Kingdom will have access. Our involvement in past Ariane development has been minor and the spin-off has not been exceptional. Launcher technology is outside the main thrust of our space strategy which is directed in the industrial field primarily at developing and exploiting the commercial potential of earth observation data.

Ariane V is an optional programme within the European Space Agency. For the United Kingdom participation is unlikely to yield returns commensurate with the heavy investment required. We have therefore decided to exercise our option not to take part in the Ariane V development programme.

Restrictive Trade Practices

Mr. Janman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on restrictive trade practices.

Mr. Maude: Fundamental reforms of the law on restrictive trade practices are proposed in the consultative document "Review of Restrictive Trade Practices Policy" (Cm. 331). This was laid before Parliament on 8 March, and I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on that date at column *114*.

Factory Space

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the available vacant factory space in development areas in the north of England.

Mr. Atkins: I am aware that demand for factory space has increased very substantially over the past year in the assisted areas in the north of England, as in other areas, and that the amount of vacant space has declined. In the Government's view, it is for the private sector to respond to this increased demand wherever possible so that there is a return to a properly functioning property market. With this aim in view, English Estates has been asked to consider urgently what may be done both to get maximum benefit from its own resources and to encourage greater private sector provision. Its proposals are expected shortly.

Exports (Vietnam)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those companies exporting to Vietnam in the last three years, and the total value of their orders.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about individual company's export entries obtained by Her Majesty's Government in pursuance of their statutory powers is considered to be confidential. Total direct United Kingdom exports to Vietnam have been:

Year	£
1985	2·1 million
1986	1·3 million
1987	[1]2·6 million

[1] Provisional.

In addition, a considerable volume of indirect United Kingdom exports is believed to reach Vietnam, particularly via Hong Kong and Singapore.

Aerospace Exports

Mr. Franks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total amount of aerospace exports in the most recent completed year.

Mr. Alan Clark: Aerospace exports during 1987 totalled £5·6 billion.

Common Internal Market (Television Advertisement)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many computer manufacturers were

invited to participate in developing the television advertisement on the common internal market; what were the criteria for choosing Mr. Alan Sugar; what was the cost of production of the advertisement and by which firm; what was the cost of television time for exhibition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Mr. Sugar is one of a number of nationally known business figures who have agreed to take part in a series of advertisements designed to underline to British business the crucial importance of preparing for the single European market. The question of invitations to other computer manufacturers does not arise.

The television advertisements are produced through the Central Office of Information by Terence Donovan Productions Ltd. The estimated cost of the current single European market television advertising is £3·8 million, of which some £3·5 million represents airtime costs.

European Community (Shareholders)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current situation regarding the conflict within European Community legislation with respect to the case for precedence of security considerations over the requirement to treat Community shareholders equally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Article 221 of the EEC treaty requires that member states accord nationals of other member states the same treatment as their own nationals as regards participation in the capital of companies or firms, without prejudice to the application of the other provisions of the treaty. One of the latter, article 223, enables any member state to take such measures as it considers necessary for the protection of the essential interests of its security which are connected with the production of or trade in arms, munitions or war material.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of companies which have advanced investment plans to claim regional development grant before the 31 March deadline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is not known how many firms have advanced their investment plans in order to be eligible for assistance under the revised regional development grant scheme following the announcement of its closure. I can, however, say that my Department received about 6,700 applications for project approval after the date of announcement of termination of the scheme and by the 31 March deadline, compared with about 700 per month on average in the year to 31 December 1987.

Selective Assistance

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the specific guidelines to be issued on the type of investments which may qualify for selective assistance.

Mr. Atkins: The question has been interpreted as referring to regional selective assistance (RSA). In order to qualify for RSA, investment projects must create or safeguard employment in the assisted areas. They should have good prospects of achieving commercial viability so that the employment benefits are durable. They should also strengthen the regional and national economy; for example, by improving productivity, increasing exports or introducing new technology. Any adverse impact on employment in other firms is taken into account. Manufacturing and service sector firms may receive assistance, but service sector projects which serve only a local market do not generally qualify for RSA.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications he has received for regional development grants in the north-west *(a)* during the 11-week period after his announcement that grants would end and *(b)* during the previous financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Following the announcement of the termination of the revised regional development grant scheme on 12 January 1988, about 2,500 applications were received in the north-west by the 31 March deadline. In the financial year to 31 March 1987, 2,435 applications were received in the north-west. The equivalent figure for the calendar year to 31 December 1987 was 2,775.

Shipbuilding (Intervention Fund)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of shipbuilding intervention fund subsidies paid under sixth directive rules in Great Britain in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding came into effect on 1 January 1987. Since then, the following offers of assistance have been made to shipyards in Great Britain:

		Number and Type of Vessel
I	*British Shipbuilders*	
(i)	Appledore Ferguson Shipbuilders Ltd.	1 Dredger 1 Ferry
II	*Private Sector*	
(i)	Cochrane Shipbuilders Ltd.	2 Tugs 1 Product Tanker
(ii)	Richard Dunston (Hessle) Ltd.	1 Tug
(iii)	Fairey Marinteknik (UK) Ltd.	1 Ferry
(iv)	McTay Marine	1 Fishing Boat
(v)	Richards (Shipbuilders) Ltd.	1 Fishing Boat

Rowntree plc

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider a reference to the Office of Fair Trading for possible anti-competitive practices if either of the two bids for Rowntree plc by Jacobs Suchard and Nestle Ltd. should succeed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Director General of Fair Trading has a duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to advise my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether a merger qualifying under the Act should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers commission for further investigation. My right hon. and noble Friend will make his decision whether to refer qualifying merger proposals, or mergers, involving Rowntree in the light of the director general's advice.

Chlorofluorohydrocarbons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give figures for the amount of funding granted to private industry by his Department to assist in the development of alternatives to chlorofluorohydrocarbons for each year since 1980 for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement about future funding.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has given no such funding, nor does it have any plans to make any available specifically for this purpose in the future. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 20 April at column *440*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of new scientific evidence, including that published on 15 March by the International Ozone Trends Panel, he will now require labelling of aerosol products to indicate whether they contain chlorofluorohydrocarbons as propellants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer to my reply to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 17 March at column *647*.

Single European Market

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what his Department is expecting to spend on promotion of the single European market in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Secretary of State has announced the start of a five-year campaign to underline to British businesses the importance of the single European market. The first phase of the campaign is expected to cost some £5 million. The level of future expenditure in this and subsequent years will depend on the way business responds to this crucial challenge.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any information on the amount of money to be spent on the promotion of the single European market by the European Commission in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have no details of the sums which the Commission is spending for this purpose.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on any grants from the European Commission to organisations within the United Kingdom to promote the single European market.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have no information on any grants of this kind.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the amount being spent on the promotion of the single European market by other European Economic Community members; and if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the amounts in *(a)* European currency unit, *(b)* European currency unit per head of population and *(c)* as a percentage of growth national product for each year for which he has the available information.

Mr. Alan Clark: A number of member states have launched or are preparing major awareness campaigns on the single market. We have no details of the budgets which they are making available for this purpose.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has made any assessment of which sectors of the economy are *(a)* well placed and *(b)* badly placed to improve their trade balance with the rest of the European Economic Community following the creating of the single European market.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 25 April at column *45*.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library copies of the brief given to advertising agencies bidding for the account to handle the promotion of the single European market.

Mr. Alan Clark: Advertising agencies working on Government accounts are appointed through the Central Office of Information which also provides the account brief. I understand that it is not the practice to publish such briefs.

"Action for Cities"

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many inquiries have been received on the "Action for Cities" telephone inquiry line.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Up to 29 April, 495 inquiries were received from businesses and approximately 400 from other sources.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the capital programmes for the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride, for each year since 1979 in actual and real terms and the projected capital programmes.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* A detailed breakdown of the full economic cost of the programmes since 1979 is attached at table 1. They were funded partly by industry but mainly by Government.

Table 2 gives the same figures converted to 1987 values using the index of manufacturing costs, which seems the most appropriate conversion. (Table 3 gives the index used, taken from the wholesale price indices for manufactured products excluding food, drink and tobacco.)

Table 4 gives the projected spends on research programmes for the years 1988-92 according to the corporate plan approved by the laboratory's supervisory board. The figures are grouped into the five major headings of flow measurement, fluids and heat (including biotechnology), structures, materials and engineering systems. The corporate plan may be changed in the light of the forthcoming departmental review of all the DTI research establishments announced in the White Paper "DTI the department for Enterprise (Cm. 278)" of January 1988.

Table 1—Full economic costs of programmes since 1979

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Flow measurement	0·9	1·0	1·1	1·20	1·4	1·7	1·8	1·9
Fluids-turbomachinery	0·8	0·9	1·1	1·0	1·6	2·3	2·3	2·2
Heat transfer	0·9	1·1	1·3	1·53	1·5	1·5	2·0	2·3
IC engines	0·4	0·45	0·41	0·42	0·45	0·5	0·6	0·7
Structural testing and analysis	1·8	2·2	2·6	2·20	2·7	3·3	3·5	3·6
Materials engineering	1·2	1·2	1·4	1·52	1·57	1·6	1·9	1·7
Computer aided engineering	0·9	0·85	1·11	1·25	2·0	2·8	2·9	4·6
Fluid power	1·0	1·1	1·0	1·44	1·6	1·8	2·1	—
Metrology	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·80	0·7	0·4	0·1	—
Wavepower-alternative energy	0·4	0·45	0·55	0·16	—	—	—	0·3
Energy conservation	0·45	0·55	0·56	0·62	0·3	—	—	—
Technology transfer-advisory work (not included above)	2·95	3·5	3·47	4·06	2·78	2·2	2·3	2·0
Laboratory FEC	12·5	14·3	15·2	16·2	16·6	18·1	19·5	19·3

Table 2—Full economic costs of programmes since 1979 converted to 1987 values

£ million

1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
21·5	21·6	21·0	20·8	20·2	20·7	21·2	20·0

Table 3
Wholesale price indices for manufacturing products (excluding food, drink and tobacco)

1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
1·720	1·513	1·381	1·282	1·216	1·145	1·085	1·038

Table 4
NEL corporate plan—planned resource deployment by centre of expertise

(£'000)

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Flow measurement	2,385	2,637	2,541	2,591	2,653
Fluids and heat	5,049	5,475	5,878	5,913	6,136
Materials	1,765	1,940	2,275	2,536	2,848
Structures	4,285	4,488	4,292	4,492	4,640
Engineering systems	4,813	5,130	5,256	5,255	5,030

BSC

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he received the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the British Steel Corporation; and when he intends to publish it.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The report was delivered to the Secretary of State in 1986. The delay in publication has been caused by the need to consider very carefully a request by the British Steel Corporation that the Secretary of State should exercise his powers under section 17 of the Competition Act 1980 to make a number of excisions to the published report in order to avoid prejudicing the interests of the corporation. We shall publish the report as soon as possible.

VR Shipping

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps were taken by his Department to ensure the creditworthiness of VR Shipping before the contract for 24 ferries was underwritten by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* Before the contracts for the 24 ferries were underwritten by ECGD the full standard investigations were carried out as regards the financial standing of VR Shipping and the provision of appropriate collateral security.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the ability of the Danish company VR Shipping to pay for the 24 ferries it ordered from NESL *(a)* at the time of signature of the contract and *(b)* now.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The answer to the previous question refers to the ability of VR Shipping to pay for the ferries at the time of signature of the contracts. As my right hon. and learned Friend reported to the House on 18 April, the contracts are currently in dispute pending the outcome of which the payment situation is unclear.

Department for Enterprise Campaign

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library copies of the brief given to advertising agencies bidding for the department for Enterprise campaign.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Advertising agencies working on Government accounts are appointed through the Central Office of Information which also provides the account brief. COI regards briefs inviting tenders from contractors as confidential commercial invitation and I see no reason to invite it to publish such briefs.

SCOTLAND

Drift Netting

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet able to publish the number of salmon and sea trout caught in river drift nets in the river Tweed for 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Drift net fishing for salmon and sea trout is unlawful in the river Tweed.

Rateable Values

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will estimate the average increases in rateable value that will result from the commercial revaluation due in Scotland in 1990 for each rating authority in Scotland;

(2) if he will break down the expected increases in rateable value into districts, towns and parts of towns within each rating area and show deviations expected from the average figures for each area.

Mr. Lang: No estimates are yet available of the likely average increases in rateable value at the 1990 non-domestic revaluation in Scotland. The assessor for each valuation area is required to provide, by 1 November 1989, to the relevant rating authorities and to the Secretary of State an estimate of the rateable valuation in 1990 of each district or island area, and the detailed information requested will not be held centrally.

Unified Business Rate

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to publish estimates of the commercial rates to be levied in Scotland under the proposed unified business rate system.

Mr. Lang: It would be premature to consider the preparation of such estimates until non-domestic property north and south of the border is valued for rating purposes on a comparable basis.

Rating Reform

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cost to public funds of the Government advertising campaign on the poll tax carried out by the agency Ogilvy and Mather in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The expenditure by my Department on the public information campaign on the community charge including the production and household distribution of the recent booklet, has been £480,566.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide for imprisonment for wilful refusal to pay the poll tax in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to seek to make the community charges registration officers answerable to him on questions of the compilation of the register and the notice given to responsible persons.

Mr. Lang: No.

Licensing Law

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take in the light of responses to the 1986 consultation paper on Scottish licensing law.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: More than 2,000 representations were received in response to the 1986 consultation paper. These are currently being analysed and decisions about what, if any, action might follow thereon will be taken when the analysis is complete.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to publish the contents of submissions made to him in response to the 1986 consultation paper on licensing law; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Except where respondents have requested confidentially, replies, comments and representations received in response to the 1986 document have been placed on public file which is open to inspection by appointment at St. Andrew's house.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce his conclusions on the current review of licensing legislation in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Replies to the 1986 consultation paper are currently being analysed, and the Government's conclusions will be announced when that analysis is complete.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to allow licensing boards in Scotland to consider an application for a regular extension at the same board meeting as an application for a permanent transfer; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is being considered along with other possible amendments to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 in the context of our current review of liquor licensing legislation.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many unemployed males over the age of 50 years and out of work for more than one year there are in the city of Glasgow;

(2) how many unemployed females over the age of 50 years and out of work for more than one year there are in the city of Glasgow;

(3) how many unemployed males over the age of 50 years and out of work for more than one year there are in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency.

(4) how many unemployed females over the age of 50 years and out of work for more than one year there are in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency.

Mr. Lang: The information requested as at the latest available date is shown in the table.

Claimants unemployed for more than one year, aged 50 and over on 14 January 1988

	Males	Females
City of Glasgow district	5,893	1,501
Glasgow, Pollok constituency	537	121

This information is available in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much in money terms, real terms and as a real term percentage local authority expenditure on the provision of accommodation for the homeless had changed in each year since 1979 *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in the city of Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible to identify centrally expenditure incurred by local authorities in meeting the needs of the homeless.

Social Work Departments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the prospects for filling vacancies in social work posts in Strathclyde, Lothian, Tayside, Borders, Central, Fife, Dumfries, Galloway, Grampian, Highland, Shetlands, Western Isles and Orkney social work departments.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information of this kind is not held centrally.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the outturn or estimated outturn total of rate support grant paid to local authorities in Scotland in total in each year from 1979-80 to 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

	£
1979-80	1,194,800,000
1980-81	1,451,000,000
1981-82	1,512,300,000
1982-83	1,633,100,000
1983-84	1,718,250,000
1984-85	1,670,870,312
1985-86	1,704,059,747
1986-87	1,656,162,143
1987-88	1,777,322,740

Note:
The figures given for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 are estimates based on the latest expenditure returns submitted by local authorities.

Hospital Services

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the costs incurred for each health board staff time and other records in respect and work connected with competition tendering for hospital services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proposals there are for monitoring procedures to be carried out by health boards following the award of contracts for cleaning and domestic services for in-house to private contractors;

(2) what instructions he has given to health boards in respect of the inclusion of Whitley council rates of pay as a condition in tender documents to be issued to private contractors; and if he will place a copy of any such instruction in the Library.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Guidance was issued with the Scottish Home and Health Department's letter of 11 December 1987 a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of any companies which have expressed an interest in tendering for *(a)* domestic and *(b)* catering services in hospitals, for local health boards in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 8 March to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish).

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the whole-time equivalent staffing numbers for each health board in *(a)* catering services and *(b)* domestic services as at (i) 31 March 1982, (ii) 31 March 1983, (iii) 31 March 1987, (iv) 31 December 1987 and (v) 31 March 1988.

Mr. Forsyth: Centrally held manpower statistics for the NHS in Scotland are up-dated twice a year at 31 March and 30 September. The most recent figures available relate to 30 September 1987. The tables set out the information requested showing operational staff and managerial staff separately.

Table 1
Catering services staff: whole time equivalent

	31 March 1982		31 March 1983		31 March 1987		30 September 1987(c)	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Scotland	5,765·1	194·7	5,793·7	195·0	5,005·3	172·5	4,900·8	167·2
CSA	21·0	1·0	26·3	2·0	19·1	1·0	18·7	1·0
Argyll and Clyde	450·5	17·0	436·6	18·0	370·0	12·0	359·4	11·0
Ayrshire and Arran	313·8	12·0	333·7	14·0	328·3	13·0	323·8	11·0
Borders	68·6	2·0	72·2	3·0	76·5	3·0	75·1	3·0
Dumfries and Galloway	184·8	5·0	180·9	4·0	176·1	4·6	170·8	5·8
Fife	271·4	9·0	271·1	10·0	274·4	11·0	271·9	11·0

	31 March 1982		31 March 1983		31 March 1987		30 September 1987(c)	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Forth Valley	369·5	7·0	366·5	7·0	268·2	7·0	236·6	7·0
Grampian	496·5	14·9	502·2	13·0	444·0	10·7	440·3	8·7
Greater Glasgow	1,539·6	46·8	1,553·8	44·0	1,232·1	39·8	1,219·2	39·8
Highland	179·9	6·0	168·4	6·0	145·9	4·9	150·7	4·9
Lanark	464·2	16·0	454·7	16·0	423·4	11·0	413·3	12·0
Lothian	783·7	32·0	799·0	32·0	695·9	33·0	675·3	30·0
Orkney	13·0	0·0	13·0	1·0	14·2	0·0	14·8	0·0
Shetland	12·3	1·0	11·3	1·0	17·0	1·0	18·0	1·0
Tayside	562·1	24·0	569·0	23·0	484·7	20·5	477·8	21·0
Western Isles	34·2	1·0	35·0	1·0	35·5	0·0	35·1	0·0

Notes:
(a) Operational staff.
(b) Managerial staff.
(c) Provisional figures.

Table 2 Domestic services staff: whole time equivalent

	31 March 1982		31 March 1983		31 March 1987		30 September 1987(c)	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Scotland	11,970·1	174·4	11,873·1	174·3	10,215·7	204·0	9,924·9	197·1
CSA	51·1	0·0	58·5	0·5	57·6	3·5	56·4	1·5
Argyll and Clyde	904·8	11·9	909·0	12·9	705·9	11·9	708·6	12·0
Ayrshire and Arran	553·2	10·0	593·1	11·0	514·4	13·0	472·1	11·0
Borders	160·8	2·0	166·4	2·5	151·5	2·9	157·8	2·9
Dumfries and Galloway	284·6	2·0	283·2	2·0	261·2	2·0	255·6	2·0
Fife	597·7	7·0	600·5	7·0	571·7	10·0	571·6	9·0
Forth Valley	560·0	6·0	552·8	6·0	502·7	7·0	491·7	6·0
Grampian	1,125·8	13·0	1,121·6	12·0	932·4	17·0	922·6	16·0
Greater Glasgow	3,215·8	46·5	3,111·8	46·4	2,598·2	46·7	2,496·7	49·7
Highland	328·9	7·0	321·6	7·0	315·2	7·0	311·8	7·0
Lanark	1,037·4	7·0	1,033·1	9·0	903·5	12·0	910·8	15·0
Lothian	1,823·5	33·5	1,821·4	28·5	1,592·6	41·8	1,489·2	35·9
Orkney	33·5	0·0	33·1	0·0	28·6	0·0	30·0	1·0
Shetland	35·0	1·0	34·1	1·0	32·1	1·0	31·9	1·0
Tayside	1,212·7	26·5	1,185·0	26·5	1,002·1	28·2	974·1	27·1
Western Isles	45·3	1·0	47·9	2·0	46·0	0·0	44·0	0·0

Notes:
(a) Operational staff.
(b) Managerial staff.
(c) Provisional figures.

Local Authority Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were *(a)* the original financial thresholds specified for each category of work for which local authorities were required to seek competitive tenders in the Local Government, Planning and Land (Scotland), Act 1980, *(b)* the dates on which these original thresholds became effective, *(c)* the date on which these thresholds were subsequently amended and *(d)* the revised financial thresholds specified for each category of works on each occasion.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Act in question is, in fact, the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The information requested is shown in the table.

Category of work	*Level of threshold from 1 April 1982*	*Level of threshold from 1 April 1984*
General road works	Jobs with an individual value of more than £100,000.	Jobs with an individual value of more than £50,000.
		Jobs amounting to £50,000 or less in excess of 70 per cent. by value of the total of such work in the previous financial year (whether undertaken by contractor or DLO).[1]
General water and sewerage works	Jobs with an individual value of more than £50,000.	No change
New construction works	Jobs with an individual value of more than £50,000.	No change
	Jobs amounting to £50,000 or less if award of the work to the DLO would result in the DLO having carried out in that financial year at least two thirds of the aggregate value of similar work which it carried out in the previous year.	Jobs amounting to £50,000 or less in excess of 40 per cent. by value of the total of such work in the previous financial year (whether undertaken by contractor or DLO).

Category of work	Level of threshold from 1 April 1982	Level of threshold from 1 April 1984
Maintenance work	Jobs with an individual value of more than £10,000.	No change. Jobs amounting to £10,000 or less in excess of either 40 per cent. by value of the total of such work in the previous financial year (whether undertaken by contractor or DLO) *or* £300,000, whichever is the higher.[2]

[1] Subject to transitional arrangements for 1984-85 only under which, for jobs amounting to £50,000 or less, up to 90 per cent. of the amount of such work undertaken by the DLO in the previous financial year could be awarded to the DLO without competition provided this was more than 70 per cent. of the total of such work commissioned by the authority in that year.

[2] Subject to transitional arrangements for 1984-85 only under which, for jobs amounting to £10,000 or less, up to 80 per cent. of the amount of such work undertaken by the DLO in the previous financial year could be awarded to the DLO without competition provided this was more than 40 per cent. of the total of such work commissioned by the authority in that year.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the actual housing account capital expenditure for every Scottish district and island local authority in each of the years since 1980-81, broken down into *(a)* net allocations and *(b)* net receipts and shown in actual and 1987-88 prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information sought cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible providing the most closely related information that is readily available centrally.

Erskine Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the overall operating deficit on the Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the financial year 1986-87 there was a surplus of revenue over operating costs of £702,050.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to *(a)* end or *(b)* increase tolls on the Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department is currently reviewing toll levels at the Bridge.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he plans to take concerning the finances of the Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department is currently pursuing a number of initiatives to reduce operating costs at the bridge including the recent transfer of responsibility for routine maintenance to Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest accumulated debt on the Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The accumulated deficiency at 31 March 1987 was £63,259,983.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to write off the accumulated debt on the Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are keeping the question of the accumulated debt on the Erskine bridge under review.

Education Reform

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what he estimates will be the budget for a school board with *(a)* up to 500 pupils, *(b)* up to 1,000 pupils and *(c)* more than 1,000 pupils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under the terms of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill it will be for education authorities, after discussion with the school boards concerned, to set budgets for their school boards. The size of the school may have some effect on the budget for a school board; a more significant variable would be the range of additional delegated functions, if any, which the board concerned had taken on.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify, in detail, how his estimate of £5 million for the cost of running school boards was arrived at.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's estimate of the net additional cost to education authorities of the initial implementation of the school boards system was made on a national basis. It was based on information about the existing school councils system and on the cost of governing bodies under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 in England and Wales.

Road Humps

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is considering giving authorisation to any roads authorities in Scotland to use road humps in their area for a trial period.

Lord James Douglas- Hamilton: Consultations are under way with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the possible introduction of the road hump provisions of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 in one or more regions.

Dogs

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to bring Scottish legislation into line with English legislation concerning the fouling of pavements by dogs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend plans to consult on this and other issues arising from a review of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 later this year. In doing so, he will take into

account measures to combat the fouling of public places by dogs which are being pursued with apparent success in some areas of England.

Pelican Crossings

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if usual vehicle speeds are included in the criteria used to judge when a road requires a pelican crossing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Vehicle speeds are one of the considerations discussed in some detail in the Scottish Development Department technical memorandum SH 7/87, which was issued by the chief road engineer to regional and islands councils.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the criteria used to decide when a road requires a pelican crossing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The relevant regulations are the Pelican Pedestrian Crossing Regulations and General Directions 1987. The criteria used in determining when a pelican crossing may be installed are contained in the associated Scottish Development Department circular No. 2/87.

School Entrances (Road Markings)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to give legal force to road markings at school entrances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for local authorities to decide whether to use the road markings as prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981 and also to decide what, if any, associated restrictions should be incorporated in a traffic regulation order. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take in the light of local authorities' budgets and rates for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Local authorities in Scotland have budgeted to spend £136 million or 3·8 per cent. over guidelines in 1988-89 and have determined rates which will, on average, increase domestic rate bills by 5·2 per cent. I am pleased that the realistic provision and grant which I have made has resulted in many authorities setting their rates at a reasonable level, but I am disappointed that so many authorities have still ignored warnings about overspending.

I am particularly concerned at the problems facing ratepayers in the areas of those authorities which are planning the most substantial expenditure excess. As a result, I have decided to initiate action in terms of section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 in respect of Lothian regional council, on the grounds that its planned expenditure for 1988-89 is excessive and unreasonable. A letter has today been sent to Lothian region proposing a rate reduction of 5·6p, and inviting it to make representations about the proposed reduction.

I am giving further consideration to whether the planned expenditure of any district council is excessive and unreasonable. I am also reflecting on appropriate grant penalties for overspending authorities in the light of views expressed to me last Friday by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. I will make a further announcement on these matters soon.

Teachers (Superannuation)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will amend the teachers' superannuation scheme so that women teachers have the same right as male teachers to pass on to their spouse on death, benefit rights and entitlements accrued in respect of contributions paid prior to 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish teachers' superannuation scheme is being amended to introduce widowers' benefits in respect of service undertaken by women teachers from 6 April 1988. The Social Security Act 1986 requires that, for service from this date, a widower will become entitled to a restricted pension of one half of the minimum pension of his spouse guaranteed for the purposes of contracting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. However, after consultation with teachers' associations and employers, it has been agreed that, in respect of service after 6 April 1988, the teachers' scheme will go further than the statutory requirement and will provide widowers' benefits on the same basis as those currently available to widows. In order to cover service prior to that date it will be necessary, however, for those women teachers, who so choose, to make appropriate payments. This is because the contributions already paid do not reflect the cost of giving such a substantial improvement.

DEFENCE

Soviet Aircraft (Interceptions)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average number of Soviet aircraft intercepted per week by RAF aircraft in the United Kingdom air defence region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is as follows:

Average number of interceptions by the RAF of Soviet aircraft per week

Year	*Average*
1979	4-5
1980	4-5
1981	3-4
1982	3-4
1983	2-3
1984	2-3
1985	3-4
1986	3-4
1987	2-3

US Maritime Pre-positioning Ships

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any request has been received from the United State authorities for the provision of port or anchorage facilities for United States maritime pre-positioning ships.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Discussions on the possibility of providing port or anchorage facilities for United States pre-positioning ships are taking place on a confidential basis but no decision has yet been taken.

COD, Donnington

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the full report of the internal inquiry into the 1983 fire at COD, Donnington.

Mr. Freeman: No, because of the need to maintain the confidentiality of board of inquiry proceedings. It would be contrary to established practice, as reflected in the Queen's regulations for the Army, to release the full report of a board of inquiry. I have, however, provided the hon. Member with a copy of a Ministry of Defence statement on the findings of the board of inquiry into the 1983 fire at COD Donnington and have placed a copy in the Library of the House.

REME (West Germany)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the production hours worked by REME workshops in West Germany, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* There is no readily available comprehensive record of production hours worked by all REME workshops in West Germany and it would entail disproportionate effort to obtain it. However, the number of production hours worked at each of the two base workshops over the last five years is as follows:

Year	*23 Base Workshop*	*37 Rhine Workshop*
1987-88	1,518,920	515,213
1986-87	1,555,577	528,767
1985-86	1,500,505	528,661
1984-85	1,570,592	543,392
1983-84	1,575,479	541,652

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much spare production capacity there was in the REME workshops in West Germany, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* It would require an extensive, lengthy and detailed examination to establish the extent of spare production capacity, if any, throughout the REME workshop organisation in BAOR over the last five years, which would entail disproportionate effort.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any production time at the REME workshops in West Germany was lost due to illicit production, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The only centrally-recorded cases of the misuse of REME production capacity for unofficial purposes over the last five years arose in 1986-87. There were two cases. According to the assessment made in the course of the SIB investigations, the total production time involved was 266 hours. Information on any minor cases which may have arisen over the last five years is not held in central records and it would entail disproportionate effort to obtain it.

Army (Dismissals)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-commissioned officers and privates have been dismissed from the Army; for the irregular use of military facilities, fraud or similar cases in each of the last five years; and what were the sums involved in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The table gives details of dismissals from the Army on conviction for fraud. I regret that the remaining information that the hon. Gentleman requested is not available:

Dismissed from the Army

	Privates	*NCOs*
1983	18	—
1984	16	1
1985	11	—
1986	25	1
1987	12	—

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-commissioned officers and privates dismissed from the Army for irregular use of military facilities, fraud or similar offences have received ex gratia payment on their dismissal in each of the last five years; and what were the amounts involved in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* Personnel dismissed from the armed forces do not receive ex-gratia payments. Since July 1984 they would normally be awarded the basic rate of pension and terminal grant to which they are entitled by virtue of their rank and length of service.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-commissioned officers and privates dismissed from the Army for the irregular use of military facilities, fraud or similar offences have received an Army pension in each of the last five years; and what were the amounts of fraud involved in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* Detailed information regarding pensions received by soldiers dismissed from the Army for the irregular use of military facilities, fraud, or similar offences is not readily available. However since July 1984 soldiers dismissed for such offences have been awarded the basic rate of pension benefits which they have earned by virtue of their rank and length of service.

Courts Martial

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-commissioned officers and privates have been court martialled for the irregular use of military facilities, fraud or similar offences in each of the last five years; and what were the sums involved in the offences in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The table gives details of court martial convictions for fraud. I regret that the remaining information that the hon. Gentleman has requested is not available:

Conviction by Courts Martial

Year	*Privates*	*NCOs*
1983	42	10
1984	28	11
1985	32	5
1986	43	7
1987	33	3

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 20 April to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, *Official Report*, column 500-1, if he will indicate the sections of the Firearms Act 1968 and the clause in the Firearms (Amendment) Bill to which he had regard in stating his Department's understanding of the expression class of firearm.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The term "class" appears in both section 2(b) of the Firearms Act 1968 and in clauses 1 and 7 of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. My Department also understands and accepts all other descriptions of firearms contained within these documents.

Sonic Booms

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sonic booms have been reported over land areas of the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and how many of these were caused by military aircraft.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* Central records of reported alleged sonic booms are not maintained.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lesotho

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to, or received from, the Lesotho Government with regard to Lesotho's relations with the Republic of South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to, or received from, the Government of the Republic of South Africa with regard to the Republic of South Africa's relations with Lesotho.

Mrs. Chalker: The South African Government are aware of our view that they should co-operate peacefully with all their neighbours, and refrain from the use of force.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy on the maintenance of stability in southern Africa of the Republic of South Africa's policy towards Lesotho.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to urge South Africa to co-operate peacefully with all its neighbours and to refrain from the use of force.

Jose Pardo (Impounding)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the impounding of the Peruvian ship, the Jose Pardo in the Huskissonn dock in Liverpool; and what action he proposes to take to ensure that the crew still with the ship can return home to Peru.

Mr. Eggar: The Peruvian ship El Presidente Jose Pardo impounded in Liverpool on the instruction of the Admiralty Marshal on 30 October 1987 against debts incurred by the vessel's owners, the state-owned Peruvian company, Compania Peruanas de Vapores (Peruvian Steamship Company).

The repatriation of the crew, who are free to leave whenever they wish, is the responsibility of the Peruvian authorities. The Peruvian embassy confirmed on 29 April that the owner's agents in Liverpool have paid the crew's salaries and are arranging for their repatriation. The future of the Jose Pardo is for the owners and court to decide.

Extradition

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, following the speech in Derbyshire on 22 April, Her Majesty's Government have received any indication from Dublin of progress in resolving differences over extradition; and if he will make a statement in the context of that speech.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Irish are fully aware of our views on the need for effective extradition procedures. We hope that there will be an early resolution of the current difficulties.

Intergovernmental Organisations

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list in the *Official Report* the intergovernmental organisations, excluding the European Communities, of which the United Kingdom is a member, the amount of the United Kingdom's annual contribution to each organisation, the percentage of each organisation's budget which this represents and which Government Department accounts for each contribution.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 29 April 1988, c. 312]:* I should have said,

"I shall reply as soon as possible."

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what general principles are applied by Her Majesty's Government in determining the level of United Kingdom contributions to intergovernmental organisations; whether the United Kingdom consults other countries about its budgetary policy with respect to these organisations; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The policy of this Government is identical to that of their predecessors; namely, to meet our obligations to international organisations in full and on time. Assessed United Kingdom contributions are usually determined by reference to a pre-set scale of assessment which varies from one organisation to another. Voluntary contributions are determined by the Minister concerned.

For the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank Group, the regional development banks and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, we seek equitable burden sharing in the capital stock of each institution and in the soft fund replenishments.

Budgetary matters are discussed with other countries as appropriate.

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has set aside public funds for an explanatory advertising campaign on the introduction of the poll tax in England and Wales.

Mr. Howard: Provision was made in the public expenditure estimates for 1988-89 for expenditure on information on the community charge and uniform business rate to be made available after Royal Assent to the Local Government Finance Bill, but no decisions have yet been taken on the form or cost of any such expenditure.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local authorities are now able to lease offices to accommodate staff for poll tax; and what conditions will have to be fulfilled for such leases not to count as prescribed expenditure.

Mr. Ridley: Local authorities do not require my consent to acquire accommodation, of whatever tenure, to be used for the purposes of any of their functions. The acquisition of a leasehold interest in office accommodation will entail prescribed expenditure unless paragraph 3(1) of schedule 3 to the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Consolidation and Amendment) Regulations 1987 as amended by the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 applies to the acquisition. The amount of prescribed expenditure is laid down in section 80 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and, subject to Parliament's approval to the Local Government Finance Bill, clauses 129 and 130 (first Lords print) of that Bill.

Lead Pollution

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations have been carried out by his Department on the dangers of lead pollution in areas adjacent to motorways.

Mr. Moynihan: In January 1986 the Government reduced the maximum permitted lead content of petrol by almost two thirds and all new petrol-driven cars will be required to run on lead-free petrol from October 1990. Studies have been carried out by the Department to monitor the effectiveness of the legislation. They have shown a substantial decrease in air lead concentration throughout the country (average 53 per cent., motorway location 54 per cent.) and the levels found are well below the EEC limit value. Average blood lead concentrations measured in 1986 in adults living near a large motorway interchange and in children attending schools alongside busy main roads were also low.

Water Pollution

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of water authority expenditure is utilised for the monitoring and effective biological control of British waterways; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much money was spent by water authorities for the last financial year available on the treatment of sewage; and what proportion of their overall budget this amounts to;

(3) what information he has as to how much was spent by the Yorkshire water authority in 1987-88 for the treatment of sewage; and what proportion of overall expenditure it amounts to.

Mr. Moynihan: The income and expenditure of the water authorities in England and Wales was set out in their annual reports and accounts for 1986-87 which were laid before Parliament on 15 July 1987. This information is summarised in "Water Facts" published annually by the Water Authorities Association. Copies of these documents are available in the Library. Outturn information about 1987-88 will be laid before Parliament in July.

Fly Tipping

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many prosecutions were brought against illegal fly tippers in Greater London during the last 12 months period for which figures are available; and what were the figures for similar periods during the preceding five years.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department that the most recent available information held centrally about prosecutions in the Metropolitan police area under section 2 of the Refuse Disposal Amenity Act 1978 and section 3 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is as set out in the table.

	Prosecutions
1984	66
1985	53
1986	70

Prosecutions under section 3 of the 1974 Act include those for the breach of licence conditions as well as those for the unlicensed deposit of waste. This information may, however, be incomplete. Information for earlier years is not readily available.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to allow prosecutions to be taken against employers or vehicle owners in cases of illegal fly tipping.

Mr. Moynihan: The prosecution of the employers of fly-tippers is already possible where it can be shown that they caused or permitted the fly tipping offence to take place. I am considering the possibility of making the registered owner of a vehicle used for fly-tipping liable to prosecution as part of the review of waste disposal legislation.

Local Authorities (Equities)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to which local authorities are investing balances and so on in equities; and if he will state in each case the political control of the authority, the value of the investment and the source of this information.

Mr. Ridley: Information on the value of equities held by individual local authorities is not collected by my Department.

Local Authorities (Capital Programmes)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his announcement on 25 April,

Official Report, columns 101-2, if he will make it his policy to lay before Parliament reports about the granting of additional allocations as a means of relaxing the capital controls, citing individual authorities, individual projects and their values; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Individual capital allocations have on many occasions hitherto been issued to individual local authorities for particular projects or purposes. Information about those likely to be of particular interest has been provided either in response to questions or through the Library. I am not persuaded of the need for more formal reporting arrangements.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he plans to give local authorities on capital programmes in the light of his statements on 9 March, *Official Report*, columns 325-36, and 25 April, *Official Report*, columns 101-2; and when such advice will be available.

Mr. Ridley: Copies of both statements and of the regulations made on 9 March and the new clauses added to the Local Government Finance Bill have already been circulated to all local authorities in England to which part VIII of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 applies. Representatives of local authorities have asked my Department to issue a circular containing guidance on the interpretation of the regulations and new clauses and amplifying the criteria which I proposed on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns 103-4. I will consider what advice can properly be given, after the current consultations have taken place.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his announcement about relaxations in the local authority capital control system, *Official Report*, 25 April, column 102, what percentage of the schemes made aware to him, after his announcement of 9 March, will be allowed to proceed by virtue of the relaxations; and what is his estimate of the value *(a)* of the schemes made aware to him after 9 March which were affected by his statement and *(b)* of the schemes of which he has knowledge that will be allowed to proceed and in respect of which he will grant additional allocations.

Mr. Ridley: I announced on 25 April certain criteria against which I would consider requests for additional capital allocations. Many of the representations which I have received since my statement of 9 March did not quantify the value of the schemes concerned or provide sufficient particulars for them to be judged against the criteria.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the changes made to the rules governing local authority capital expenditure since 1980.

Mr. Ridley: The present system for the control of local authority capital expenditure is contained in part VIII of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which took effect from 1 April 1981, and prescribed expenditure regulations made thereunder. The original regulations made in 1981 have been amended by further prescribed expenditure regulations made in 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1988. In addition, amendments relating to deferred purchase were made by the Local Government Act 1987 and consequential regulations. Further amendments stand to be made under the Local Government Finance Bill.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the outturn or estimated outturn total of rate support grant paid to local authorities, within each standard economic region, in total, in each year from 1979-80 to 1987-89.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

Rate support grant

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
South East	2,473·473	2,856·488	2,797·865	2,844·049	2,749·122	2,711·310	2,739·686	2,841·019	2,850·716	2,852·703
South West	608·890	717·471	772·024	773·548	770·703	785·617	763·628	740·407	797·808	820·106
East Anglia	237·488	282·565	302·603	307·256	310·400	310·349	290·431	291·178	300·931	302·192
West Midlands	761·723	896·405	945·372	949·203	1,010·028	1,025·689	1,004·430	1,052·489	1,043·422	1,044·842
East Midlands	584·950	684·816	750·100	744·861	755·326	767·979	759·462	708·639	761·570	777·748
North West	1,197·551	1,413·074	1,517·018	1,491·752	1,519·498	1,531·872	1,573·071	1,531·388	1,629·770	1,711·248
Yorkshire and Humberside	902·489	1,088·756	1,157·512	1,165·507	1,198·221	1,213·150	1,222·959	1,173·759	1,269·143	1,325·565
Northern Region	603·613	719·583	757·833	742·668	753·800	758·023	774·722	712·131	794·270	847·415
Total all regions	7,370·177	8,659·158	9,000·927	9,018·844	9,067·098	9,103·989	9,128·389	9,051·010	9,455·630	9,681·819

Notes:

1. Rate support grant comprised needs, resources and domestic elements in 1979-80 and 1980-81 and block grant, domestic rate relief grant in following years.
2. The figures given are the latest available grant entitlements. These are final for the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 inclusive.

Methyl Chloroform and Carbon Tetrachloride

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures for the consumption and production of methyl chloroform and carbon tetrachloride for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the European Economic Community, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* the rest of the world for each year since 1980 for which figures are available.

Mr. Moynihan: Figures for United Kingdom production of methyl chloroform and carbon tetrachloride are commercially confidential; figures for United Kingdom

consumption are not available. European Community figures for production and consumption are not available. Following are available figures of estimated world and USA use since 1980; production figures are not available;

Thousand metric tonnes

	Chloroform		*Carbon Tetrachloride*	
	World	*USA*	*World*	*USA*
1980	n/a	314	n/a	322
1981	n/a	279	n/a	329
1982	n/a	270	n/a	266
1983	n/a	266	n/a	260
1984	n/a	303	n/a	323
1985	545	270	1,029	280
1986	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1987	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Product Uses and Market Trends for Potential Ozone Depleting Substances: 1985-2000. Rand. 1986.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the contribution of methyl chloroform and carbon tetrachloride to the depletion of stratospheric ozone.

Mr. Moynihan: Methyl chloroform has a low ozone-depleting potential as it tends to decompose before reaching the stratosphere. Carbon tetrachloride has a relatively high ozone-depleting potential, but most of what is produced is not emitted as it is used primarily as an intermediate in the production of CFC11 and CFC12. There is, therefore, considerable uncertainty about how much of these gases reach the stratosphere but current estimates suggest that each could contribute about 7 per cent. to the potential depletion of the ozone layer from man-made sources.

Montreal Protocol

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *495*, he will state what proposals Her Majesty's Government will make at the meeting of the Environment Council on 16 June regarding implementation of the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Moynihan: The Commission has put forward a proposed regulation for the implementation of the protocol in the European Community. It is too early to judge how far this will have progressed by the time of the Environment Council on 16 June but the United Kingdom will continue to press for early agreement on Communitywide action.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when, pursuant to his answer of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *494*, he expects the European Community member states simultaneously to ratify the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Moynihan: The aim is that the European Community and its member states should ratify the Montreal protocol simultaneously before the end of 1988.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cubic metres of intermediate level radioactive waste are stored in *(a)* Sellafield and *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ridley: A total of 28,200 cu m of intermediate level radioactive waste is stored at Sellafield and 13,600 cu m elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Rural Areas (Assistance)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to increase the effectiveness of the Government's policies for assisting rural areas.

Mrs. Roe: On 1 April the Development Commission merged with its main agency, the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (COSIRA) under the title of the Rural Development Commission. The staff and activities of COSIRA have been transferred to the commission and now form its small business service. The commission will continue to be the principal instrument for carrying forward the Government's policies for diversifying rural enterprise and will now have the added advantage of being in direct contact with private firms in rural areas.

CIVIL SERVICE

Outside Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many Crown servants have left to take up outside appointments, by year from 1979; from what Government Departments; and what grades were involved.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally. However, I refer the hon. Member to the statistical report prepared by the Cabinet Office (Office of the Minister for the Civil Service) entitled "Acceptance of Outside Appointments by Crown servants — 1987", copies of which I placed in the Library of the House on 10 March 1988. This contains most of the information requested covering particularly the years 1980 to 1987 inclusive.

Security (Vetting)

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will provide details of the vetting procedures applied to non-Civil Service staff employed by outside contractors who undertake security duties at Government establishments.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* It is the responsibility of individual Government Departments to ensure the suitability of any private company and its employees for work on their behalf. It would not be appropriate to give details of the steps taken to do so.

WALES

Job Creation

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the jobs associated with the regional development grant applications currently being considered by his Department are new jobs; and how many are safeguarded jobs.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am pleased to confirm that all the jobs involved in the 1,935 applications being processed from the beginning of this month are new jobs for I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman must be aware that regional development grants take account only of new jobs created directly in the activities to which the project relates.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up breast cancer screening units in each of the health authority areas in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Our aim is to extend the breast screening service to all parts of Wales by 1990. In view of the low population density of much of the Principality many areas are likely to be served by mobile screening units.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of employees in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales in employment in (i) May 1979 and (ii) May 1987, and the total number of employees in manufacturing industry standard industrial classification 2-4 in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Available data are as follows:

Thousands

	All employees in employment		*Manufacturing*	
	Clwyd	*Wales*	*SIC 68 (orders III-XIX)*	*SIC 80 (divisions 2-4)*
June 1978	128	1,015	310	..
June 1979	..	1,033	315	..
September 1984	119	886	..	212
June 1987	..	863	..	206

Source: Department of Employment.

PPA and Nursery Schooling

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the cash spent on *(a)* PPA and *(b)* nursery schooling in Wales in 1986-87 and 1987-88; if he proposes to give extra cash to PPAs in Wales; if he proposes to make available extra cash for nursery schooling in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: PPA Wales has been receiving grant aid from the Department towards its administrative and headquarters costs for a number of years. The organisation received £118,500 in 1986-87 and £122,997 in 1987-88. The level of grant aid in 1988-89 has yet to be decided.

Total current expenditure on the nursery and primary sectors combined was £249·8 million in 1986-87 and £273·8 million in 1987-88. Separate information on nursery schooling is not collected. It is for LEAs to determine their own priorities within the resources available to them.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the outturn or estimated outturn total of rate support grant paid to local authorities in Wales, in total, in each year from 1979-80 to 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is given as follows:

	£ million
1979-80[1]	589·9
1980-81[1]	693·4
1981-82[1]	745·3
1982-83[1]	797·8
1983-84[1]	812·0
1984-85[1]	815·4
1985-86[1]	837·0
1986-87[2]	882·1
1987-88[3]	937·1

[1] Outturn.
[2] Revised estimate.
[3] Budget.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he calculates to be the average per capita income tax saving per week for British taxpayers who currently pay tax at a marginal rate of 60 per cent., as a result of his Budget proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The average reduction in income tax liability in a full year at 1988-89 levels of income for taxpayers whose marginal rate would have been 60 per cent. under the 1987-88 regime indexed to 1988-89 is estimated to be £190 per week.

Take-home Pay

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate how, in detail, he has arrived at the figure of 27½ per cent. as the rise in real take-home pay for a married man with two children on average earnings between 1978-79 and 1988-89, as given in response to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 14 April, *Official Report*, column *339*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The detailed calculations are in the table.

The earnings figures are derived from the new earnings survey series for full-time males on adult rates, whose pay was not affected by absence. The 1978-79 figure has been adjusted to take account of a change in definition of the series in 1983. The 1988-89 figure has been projected from 1986-87 using the assumptions of a 7½ per cent. increase between 1986-87 and 1987-88 and a 6½ per cent. increase between 1987-88 and 1988-89, as provided to the Government Actuary and reported in chapter 3 of the autumn statement 1987.

The retail prices index for 1978-79 has been rebased to 13 January 1987 = 100, the base of the current RPI series. The RPI is assumed to rise by 4 per cent. between 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Calculation of real take home pay for a married man with two children on average earnings

£ per week

	1978-79	*1988-89*
Earnings	92·80	244·70
Income tax	−18·46	−41·49
NIC	−6·03	−22·02
Child benefit	+5·14	+14·50
Take home pay	73·45	195·69
RPI	51·10	106·80
Take-home pay at constant 1988-89 prices	153·51	195·69
Percentage increase		27·50

Central Office of Information

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff have been employed in the Central Office of Information for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is as follows:

1 January	*Permanent staff in-post (including part-timers)*
1979	1,163
1980	1,177
1981	1,158
1982	1,071
1983	969
1984	961
1985	925
1986	878
1987	815
1988	804

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the rules on Government advertising under which the Central Office of Information operates.

Mr. Lilley: The conventions on central Government publicity and advertising are set out in the Government's evidence submitted to the Widdicombe inquiry in 1985 and deposited in the Library of the House (published as annex D to "Local Authority Publicity: interim report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business chaired by Mr. David Widdicombe QC").

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the budget for the Central Office of Information for each of the years 1978-79 to 1987-88; and how much of that budget was expended on advertising and how much on other Central Office of Information activities.

Mr. Peter Lilley *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*Total expenditure £*	*Advertising expenditure £*	*Other expenditure £*
1978-79	35,400,000	18,800,000	16,600,000
1979-80	40,700,000	20,600,000	20,100,000
1980-81	45,100,000	20,000,000	25,100,000
1981-82	46,100,000	18,500,000	27,600,000
1982-83	48,300,000	18,800,000	29,500,000
1983-84	60,300,000	21,300,000	39,000,000
1984-85	64,700,000	21,900,000	42,800,000
1985-86	66,900,000	25,100,000	41,800,000
1986-87	149,800,000	98,500,000	51,300,000
1987-88[1]	150,400,000	88,000,000	62,400,000

[1] Figures given are an estimate.

Life Expectancy

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many times the Government Actuary has uplifted the life expectancy of adult males and females since 1958.

Mr. Brooke: The Government Actuary's department has calculated the life expectancy of adults in the United Kingdom on the basis of current mortality rates about 30 times since 1958 for publication in the Central Statistical Office's "Annual Abstract of Statistics." In addition, the Government Actuary has made a projection of life expectancy on about 25 occasions since 1958 for the purpose of the national population projections. On almost every occasion life expectancies have shown increases for both men and women.

EC (Budget Council)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met in Luxembourg on 28 April. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reached agreement on the expenditure provisions of its second reading draft budget. In response to the Italian delegation, however, who entered a waiting reserve on the content of the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) needed to finance the budget, the President of the Council did not declare the new draft budget formally established.

In its discussions on the European Parliament's modifications and amendments to the first reading draft budget established on 7 March, the Council agreed on total expenditure of 45·1 billion ecu (becu) (£31·3 billion) in commitment appropriations and 43·6 becu (£30·3 billion) in payment appropriations. Within these totals provision for agricultural guarantee expenditure remains, as in the Council's first reading draft budget, at 27·5 becu (£19·1 billion) with a further 1·24 becu (£0·9 billion) for disposals of existing stocks and a monetary reserve of 1 becu (£0·7 billion).

As regards non-compulsory expenditure, the Council agreed on figures of 11·4 becu (£7·9 billion) for commitment appropriations and 10 becu (£6·9 billion) for payment appropriations. The increases over 1987 are 10·5 per cent. and 8·1 per cent., respectively, compared with corresponding figures in the first reading draft budget of 7 per cent. and 5·9 per cent. and with the "maximum rate" of increase, calculated in accordance with the treaty, of 7·4 per cent. The European Parliament will have the right under the treaty to add the remainder of its half maximum rate margin to these amounts (some 27 mecu (£19 million) for commitments and 144 mecu (£100 million) for payments).

The Council agreed that the IGA total and the contributions of individual member states would be adjusted automatically so as to conform with the payments due under the Community's new own resources decision as finally agreed. The Italian delegation made clear that in the discussions on this decision they would continue to argue for an interpretation of the Brussels European Council conclusions which was more favourable to Italy than that proposed by the Commission.

The presidency asked the Italian delegation to resolve the matter of their waiting reserve by 4 May, which is the day before the deadline under article 203(5) of the treaty for the Council to act on the Parliament's modifications and amendments. I will keep the House informed about the outcome.

Government Securities

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are holding *(a)* 3·5 per cent. War Loan, and *(b)* all undated Government securities.

Mr. Lilley: There are approximately 459,000 holdings of undated Government securities on all registers. Of these, approximately 335,700 are of 3·5 per cent. war loan. It is impossible without undue cost to distinguish between personal and corporate holdings.

Pensions (RPI Error)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are being made for donations to public service charities following the understatement of the retail prices index and its implications for centrally administered public service pensions.

Mr. Brooke: The total saving attributable to the retail prices index error in the superannuation schemes for civil servants, teachers, NHS staff, members of the armed forces and overseas pensioners is about £7·2 million.

This sum is being paid in donations to charities supporting needy or retired personnel in those services by the responsible Departments. The office of the Minister for the Civil Service has already made payments of about £0·4 million to Civil Service charities in the financial year 1987-88. The remaining donations to Civil Service and other public service charities will be made in this financial year and next.

The charities will include:

Civil Service
- Civil Service Retirement Fellowship
- Civil Service Benevolent Fund
- Civil Service Sports Council
- Civil Service Club
- Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
- Post Office and Civil Service Sanatorium Society
- Occupational Pension Advisory Service

Teachers (England and Wales)
- Teachers' Benevolent Fund
- Church Schoolmasters' and Schoolmistresses' Benevolent Institution

Scottish Teachers
- Educational Institute of Scotland Benevolent Fund
- Scottish Secondary Teachers' Benevolent Fund

Armed Forces
- King George's Fund for Sailors
- Army Benevolent Fund
- RAF Benevolent Fund

Overseas Service Pensioners
- Overseas Pensioners' Benevolent Society
- Staines Trust
- Sudan Government Pensioners' Supplementation Fund

Fuller information will be available on request from the Departments concerned once their detailed arrangements are complete.

For National Health Service staff, there is at present no national charity on the scale desirable for so large a public service. The Government are therefore taking this opportunity of consulting staff and management interests on the possibility of establishing a National Health Service benevolent fund which would be registered as a charity, managed on voluntary lines, and given a substantial initial endowment from public funds.

Tax Units

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax units will be on incomes, including unearned income, in excess of £50,000, £70,000 and £100,000 in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* In 1988-89 it is estimated that 230,000 tax units (married couples and single people) will have total income of over £50,000 and that 100,000 tax units will have income of over £70,000. I regret that a reliable estimate of the number of

tax units with income of over £100,000 per year is not available as estimates are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes. All estimates are provisional.

Government Establishments (Security Arrangements)

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list those Government establishments which are currently examining putting out to tender the security functions where those functions are currently undertaken by Civil Service staff;

(2) if he will list all the Government establishments where the security functions are undertaken by outside contractors, and the names of those contractors.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, since records of the security arrangements in Government establishments are not held centrally.

VAT

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proposed rate of value added tax which the Commission of the European Communities proposes to be applied in the United Kingdom to proceeds from the gifts in kind to charities, including proceeds from retail sales; what is the approximate range of annual revenue he would expect to receive at the proposed or current United Kingdom relevant rate from such a tax; what was the date at which such a proposal was first made known to him; what consultations he has had with, and what information he has provided to, the principal charities concerned; what is the response of Her Majesty's Government to this proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The Commission's tax approximation proposals (published in August 1987) would require charity shops to charge VAT on donated goods sold retail. The rate (standard 14-20 per cent. or reduced 4-9 per cent.) would depend on the goods sold. Donations of goods by private individuals would not be affected, as these are outside the scope of the tax. I regret that information which might enable us to estimate the likely revenue yield is not held centrally.

I have received no representations from charities on this subject.

The Government's position, which has been repeated on numerous occasions, is that we are not prepared to accept proposals which would restrict our ability to apply VAT zero rates. Our position is safeguarded because changes to EC tax law require unanimity.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink farms are currently in operation in each county and region, respectively, in England; and what were the equivalent figures 12 months ago.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

Mink farms (premises) in operation in England by MAFF Region and County or former County

Region and County	*As at 24 March 1987*	*As at 24 March 1988*
Northern	14	15
Humberside	4	4
Northumberland	1	1
North Yorkshire	1	1
Former county of South Yorkshire	1	1
Former county of West Yorkshire	7	8
Midlands and West	13	17
Cheshire	2	2
Lancashire	10	14
Staffordshire	1	1
Eastern	4	7
Hertfordshire	0	1
Lincolnshire	1	1
Norfolk	1	2
Suffolk	2	3
South Eastern	6	6
Buckinghamshire	1	1
Hampshire	2	2
Isle of Wight	1	1
Kent	1	1
West Sussex	1	1
South Western	8	8
Cornwall	4	4
Dorset	1	1
Gloucestershire	1	1
Wiltshire	2	2

I regret that numbers of mink farm licences and licensed farms given in reply to the hon. Member's previous questions on 24 March, at column *206*, on this subject were incorrect. The position is that at 24 March there were 45, not 48 licences for the farming of mink in force in England. These licences covered 46, not 49 farms. A year earlier there were 42 licences covering 43 farms, not 44.

Agricultural Debt

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of agricultural debt per acre in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: In 1985, the latest year for which firm figures are available, the average level of agricultural debt in the United Kingdom was £179·62 per acre, the provisional figure for 1986 is £182·87 per acre and the forecast figure for 1987 is £188·28 per acre.

Quick-frozen Foods

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the negotiations over European Community document 9402/84 on the approximation of laws relating to quick-frozen foodstuffs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 20 April 1988 at columns *505-6*.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes to meet

representatives of the Country Landowners Association to discuss the woodland grant scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet the Country Landowners Association for the specific purpose of discussing this subject.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding good stewardship of ancient monuments by the agricultural community.

Mr. Gummer: My officials regularly meet English Heritage and other archaelogical interests. During these meetings, and in their response to relevant consultation papers issued by my Department, these interests have made known their views on good stewardship of ancient monuments by the agricultural community.

Free Food Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of Thursday 21 April, how much of the butter and beef available under the free food scheme in the United Kingdom has already been released; how much he expects to be released; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Butter and beef is now being allocated to designated organisations for withdrawal from intervention during the rest of 1988, up to the full limit of £10·4 million on the funds that the Commission has authorised for the United Kingdom. My present expectation is that this will be sufficient to fund the release of about 2,500 tonnes of butter and about 1,600 tonnes of beef. Release will start when the designated organisations have made their practical arrangements.

Donnington Fire (Pollution)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area of farmland has suffered from pollution following the fire at Donnington, Shropshire; what monitoring his Department is undertaking; and what criteria he will use in deciding whether to take emergency powers to protect human health under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Mr. Donald Thompson: An area of farmland of about 162 hectares immediately downwind of the fire, covering two farms, has been affected by deposited ash and particles. The Ministry immediately undertook an extensive survey of vegetation in the area covered by the smoke plume extending across Shropshire to the Welsh border; no asbestos was found in these samples. A more intensive survey in the immediate vicinity of the fire has found some evidence of local deposition of asbestos in the debris; further analysis of food crops grown in the vicinity of the fire is in progress.

The criteria for action under part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 are listed in section 1(1) of the Act. Advice has been given to farmers in the affected area to keep livestock under cover and I understand the local environmental health officer has advised householders to wash fruit and vegetables from their garden.

Research and Development

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and locations of bodies in Scotland, England and Wales whose research and development funding is currently under review by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. MacGregor: The current internal review of Agriculture Departments' R and D expenditure covers all areas of activity with particular reference to near market work. I cannot comment on the implications for particular locations at this stage.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and locations of research institutes in the United Kingdom currently in receipt of financial support for research and development from public funds.

Mr. MacGregor: Within the areas of responsibility of my Department, public funds are used to support both in-house research and externally commissioned work at a large number of locations. My Department also provides a grant in aid to the royal botanic gardens, and has ad hoc contracts with certain universities and a limited number of commercial establishments. The main external contractors are the Agricultural and Food Research Council and Natural Environment Research Council, details of whose institutes are available from the councils themselves.

Work on agriculture, fisheries and food is also funded by the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

Barnes Review

Dr. Bray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the terms of reference of the Barnes review of the transfer of technology and the effectiveness of near market research and development which his Department supports.

Mr. MacGregor: I am placing a copy of the terms of reference in the Library of the House, though as the review is an internal policy study we do not intend to publish its findings.

Fallow Land (Grants)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning land which is left fallow and for which grants are obtained which is subsequently used for stock grazing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* Under the Community set-aside scheme, member states have the option of permitting extensive grazing of livestock on land taken out of production. We have received a number of representations both for and against operating this option in the United Kingdom, and we shall be taking these into account in deciding on the final form of the national scheme. An announcement on this will be made as soon as possible.

Clyde Herring

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is his intention to seek a review of the state of the stock of Clyde herring before the end of May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 25 April 1988]:* The annual and international process of obtaining and analysing scientific data on fish stocks is initially undertaken by a variety of scientific working groups, which then submit reports to the advisory committee for fisheries management (ACFM) for consideration. The ACFM will then produce a further report reviewing the state of the stocks (including the Clyde herring stock) and providing advice on management policy. The ACFM will be meeting from 16 to 26 May 1988 and will report shortly thereafter. I shall take a particular interest in their advice on all stocks of importance to United Kingdom fishermen, including, of course, Clyde herring.

Forestry Grant

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, further to his answer of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *398*, he will state *(a)* the area of land approved for forestry grant-aid and *(b)* the area of land planted or restocked by the private sector, in each of the five English conservancies of the Forestry Commission in the three years 31 March 1985, and in each of the three conservancies in the years from 1 April 1985 to date.

Mr. Gummer: *[holding answer 22 April 1988]:*

The information is as follows:

Year Ended 31 March	*Conservancy*	*Area of new planting or restocking approved for grant-aid (hectares)*	*Area of new planting or restocking grant-aided by the Forestry Commission (hectares*
1983	North West	1,142	495
	North East	2,329	1,180
	East	1,221	647
	South East	4,408	394
	South West	2,125	792
1984	North West	1,770	486
	North East	1,334	1,269
	East	4,104	543
	South East	3,491	407
	South West	5,591	710
1985	North West	2,757	775
	North East	2,263	659
	East	5,009	563
	South East	2,140	304
	South West	5,210	442
1986	North	3,356	883
	East	5,681	1,213
	West	6,965	1,234
1987	North	5,123	1,110
	East	13,433	1,381
	West	6,689	1,372
1988	North	3,939	1,238
	East	11,076	1,670
	West	8,917	1,467

TRANSPORT

Disabled People (Facilities)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department holds on the level of grants local authorities give under section 106 of the Transport Act 1985 towards providing, maintaining or improving *(a)* any vehicle equipment or other facilities intended wholly or mainly for disabled people, or *(b)* any equipment or other facilities intended to provide assistance for disabled people which are incorporated in vehicles, and so on, designed for the public at large.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for local authorities to decide what use to make of the powers conferred on them by section 106 of the Transport Act 1985 to make grants towards the provision or adaptation of vehicles to meet the needs of disabled people. The Department does not keep central records of expenditure incurred.

Public Utilities (Replacement Work)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what survey by his Department has taken place as to the replacement work undertaken by public utilities on repairs of holes they dig on public highways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department commissioned a comprehensive review of public utilities street works from a committee chaired by Professor Michael Horne, whose report was published in November 1985. It found that the principal problem with reinstatements was the division of responsibility between the utility and the highway authority, leading to poor temporary reinstatements.

The committee's principal recommendation was that the full responsibility should be placed on the utilities, backed up by a series of recommendations to ensure that they do a good job. The report was generally welcomed and the Government have accepted the great majority of the recommendations.

We are committed to introduce the necessary legislation. We are seeking a suitable opportunity to bring it before Parliament.

A1 (Crash Barriers)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the recent fatal accident on the A1 at Great Ponton in Lincolnshire, he will reconsider his decision not to instal central reservation crash barriers for the entire length of the A1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There has been no such decision. We are installing central reserve safety fencing on the A1 in accordance with the revised criteria announced on 17 December 1986.

There is a rolling programme, phased in with major maintenance works in order to minimise disruption to the travelling public.

The scheme to install safety fencing along a length of the A1 at Great Ponton was completed in November 1986. Unfortunately the fatal accident occurred just south of this section.

Cycle Routes (London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London borough councils as to their policy on developing cycle routes within their borough; and what money he has allocated for this work.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is a member, together with the London boroughs, of the London cycling forum, an advisory body sponsored by the London planning advisory committee.

Cycling schemes which meet the criteria set out in the Department's circular 1/88 are eligible for transport supplementary grant as part of highway improvements.

I will send the hon. Member leaflets, produced by the Department's traffic advisory unit, describing good practice in cycle schemes in London. This series is available in the Library.

Speed Limits

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review the speed limits at which traffic may pass through residential areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Applications to the Department for speed limits below 30mph will be considered sympathetically when allied to speed-reducing engineering measures. In residential areas, it is for the local highway authorities to consider individual cases using guidance from the advisory criteria given in circulars Roads 1/80 and 4/83. General policy on speed limits is kept under constant review.

Horne Report

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is intending to take on implementing the recommendations of the Horne report.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are preparing proposals for legislation and we are consulting the street works advisory committee on these. When the proposals are complete we intend to consult interested parties. Action is proceeding jointly with the utilities and highway authorities to implement recommendations of the report relating to specifications for reinstatements, the training and certification of workmen, and the development of a computerised street works register. Negotiations are taking place on the arrangements for diversionary works.

Local Authority Transport Expenditure

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what grounds his decision was made to consult outside bodies on his Department's arrangements for local authority transport expenditure; on what basis outside bodies are intended to respond to his Department's request for information; what information has been provided by his Department to outside bodies for consideration of these matters and his Department's developing position; and if he is contemplating changes in expenditure arrangements, specifically in relation to transport supplementary grants.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As part of the continuing programme to review efficiency of Government Departments, the Department of Transport is carrying out an efficiency scrutiny of its activities in relation to local authorities' capital expenditure on roads. As is usual for such scrutinies, the examining officer is seeking the views of outside bodies that may have an interest in the activities under review. Information on the present arrangements is already generally available. We have no immediate plans to change the arrangements for transport supplementary grant. We shall consider suggestions for change including any which arise from the present review.

Street Works Advisory Committee (Recommendations)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what factors are delaying the introduction of legislation to implement the recommendations of the street works advisory committee in relation to excavation of roads by public utilities; what representations he has received from the relevant statutory undertakers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The street works advisory committee is advising the Department on our proposals for legislation to implement the Horne report. The proposals are not yet complete because we are awaiting the outcome of negotiations between the public utilities and highway authorities on the issue of diversions to utility apparatus required as a consequence of highway improvement works.

The Government are committed to legislation and we are seeking a suitable opportunity to introduce it, but we have a full programme of legislation.

The statutory undertakers in their collective response to the Horne report supported the need for legislation. Letters from the chairmen of British Gas and the Electricity Council support its early introduction.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest accumulated debt on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated accumulated debt at the end of the 1987-88 financial year was £95 million.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available figures for traffic flows across the Severn bridge *(a)* on a daily basis and *(b)* in total.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average daily traffic flow across the Severn bridge for the year up to the end of March 1988 was 44,263 vehicles. Since the opening of the crossing in 1966, nearly 230 million vehicles have used it.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the overall operating deficit on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated overall deficit, including interest and sinking fund contributions, was £11·5 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to increase tolls on the Severn bridge following the recent report from the Auditor General.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It was said in the foreword to the 1986-87 account, published on 6 April, that the question of a tolls increase is under review.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to write off the accumulated debt on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 8 December 1987, *Official Report*, columns *119-20*.

Brigg and Redbourne (Bypass)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why there is a further delay to the tendering process of the A15 Brigg and Redbourne bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that the preparatory work is not proceeding as quickly as Humberside county council, the highway authority responsible for the scheme, would wish. The contract preparation has been delayed because the Department's new specification for highway works has been applied to this project. The new road will benefit from the higher standard of construction.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects construction to begin on the A15 Brigg and Redbourne bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a Humberside county council scheme for which the Department is giving a 100 per cent. grant to approved expenditure. The starting date is for the council to determine, within the constraints of the Department's grant rules.

Yorkshire and Humberside (Regional Director)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his regional director for Yorkshire and Humberside will be replying to the letter dated 25 April from the director of technical services of Humberside county council; and if a copy of this reply will be sent to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: He will do so shortly. A copy will be sent to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why there is a delay in the issuing of grant approval for the A15 Brigg and Redbourne bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Grant approval should be issued shortly after the necessary financial approvals have been obtained. We need to be sure that, in the light of the recently notified substantial increase in the estimated cost, the scheme represents value for money.

National Travel Survey

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the results of the last national travel survey; and whether a decision has been taken on the timing of the next survey.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A report of the 1985-86 national travel survey has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. We have asked the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to begin data collection for the next national travel survey in June. We have decided that it would be more cost-effective if the survey were a continuous one. The new survey, which will follow the same design as that held in 1985-86, will collect data from 10,000 households over three years instead of 12 months.

Merchant Navy (Training)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what use he proposes to make of the powers in the Merchant Shipping Bill *[Lords]* to give financial assistance in respect of Merchant Navy training.

Mr. Channon: I am placing in the Library a document entitled "A Scheme for Department of Transport Assistance for Merchant Navy Officer Training", which outlines the training scheme I propose to introduce under powers contained in the Merchant Shipping Bill.

In developing this scheme I have had two objectives. The first is to increase the number of officers being trained for service in the Merchant Navy, which declined significantly during the 1980s. The second is to build on and develop the existing training arrangements, and on the use already being made by the industry of Government financial assistance, notably the funding available under the Manpower Services Commission's youth training scheme.

The scheme will arrange for suitable men and women, whether specially recruited officer cadets or in-service rating trainees, to follow a programme of training which leads to a Department of Transport first certificate of competency as a deck officer or marine engineer officer, in accordance with the recommendations of the Merchant Navy training board and as approved by my Department.

Each officer trainee in respect of whom Department of Transport assistance is payable will be required to be employed or sponsored by a managing agent who will be responsible for the administration of the trainee's full programme of vocational education and training from recruitment to completion. The managing agent might be a traditional shipping company, a suitable training company or group, or a nautical college. The overall scheme will be managed on my Department's behalf by a co-ordinating agent. I am pleased that the General Council of British Shipping, which has a wealth of experience and contacts in this field, has agreed to take on the role of co-ordinating agent for the scheme. Recruitment to the scheme will be through the managing agents, under the guidance of the co-ordinating agent.

At present, where officer trainees are following a scheme of training approved by the Manpower Services Commission, and are eligible on age grounds, the managing agent receives assistance in respect of such trainees at the standard rates (currently £37 per week) for the YTS scheme. Those arrangements will continue, and managing agents will be expected to take the maximum advantage of assistance available both under the YTS and from LEA grants. My Department will give financial assistance in respect of trainees who are ineligible for YTS assistance on age grounds. This assistance will be given at the rate of £50 per trainee per week. Thus an officer trainee who began a four-year course of training at age 16 would, if following an approved course, be eligible for assistance for the first two years under YTS, and for the second two years under my Department's scheme. For a trainee embarking on a course at age 18, or later, assistance would be claimed under my Department's scheme for the entire period. In either case, assistance under my Department's scheme would be abated by the amount of any LEA grant payable.

I plan to give assistance under my Department's scheme not only in respect of new trainees, but in respect of

trainees who are already undergoing an approved course of training and who are ineligible for YTS grants on age grounds. I shall be announcing in due course the date from which payments will be made in respect both of new and of existing trainees. My aim is, with the help of the co-ordinating agent and of the managing agents, to have the scheme in operation to give financial assistance in respect of the new intake of officer trainees this autumn.

I also recognise the importance of junior officers studying for higher statutory qualifications. I therefore plan to make payments, again at the rate of £50 per head per week, towards the costs of officers studying for such qualifications, for the number of weeks of study leave which are prescribed by current National Maritime Board agreements. These payments would be made either to the individuals concerned, or to companies employing them who provide paid study leave, as appropriate. These payments will also be administered by the co-ordinating agent.

I believe that these arrangements will be widely welcomed in the industry. As has already been announced, a budget of £2·5 million has been earmarked for the scheme in 1988-89, and £3·5 million for the full year 1989-90. This will represent a very significant level of financial assistance, over and above that available through YTS, for training in the industry. Our intention is that the Government's support should lead to a substantial increase in the number of cadets being trained and should open up new opportunities in the industry for those interested in a challenging and worthwhile career. I hope that everyone concerned will take full advantage of this assistance.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when negotiations will be resumed with the United States Government on the licence application of United States carriers for new services to and from Manchester airport; what action has been taken since the previous negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The United States Government are not prepared to enter into further substantial discussions on United States carriers' access to Manchester until next year. Her Majesty's Government have pursued a number of points arising from the March talks. We will try to secure a resumption of negotiations as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

"The Urban Renaissance"

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts, further to his reply of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *353*, what information he has on *(a)* the larger research project of which "The Urban Renaissance" is a part, *(b)* the firm of consultants undertaking the research project, and *(c)* the total cost of the larger research project.

Mr. Luce: The consultants, Dewe Rogerson Ltd., are assisting the Arts Council in a widespread public information campaign designed to encourage partnerships among inner city agencies, arts organisations, local government and the private sector to promote the use of the arts in the regeneration of urban areas. "The Urban Renaissance" is a part of that campaign. Fees paid to individual consultants are not separately identified in the Arts Council's accounts.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts, further to his reply of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *353*, what information he has on how the time of the Arts Council's permanent staff was costed and attributed to production of the Arts Council pamphlet "The Urban Renaissance".

Mr. Luce: An estimate was made of the staff time taken on the preparation of the material, and the cost of that time was estimated by reference to the salaries and overhead costs of the staff engaged.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the printing costs of the Arts Council pamphlet "The Urban Renaissance".

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The pamphlet cost £2,560 to print.

Challenge Training Scheme

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the cost of the Arts Council pamphlet on the challenge training scheme.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The Arts Council pamphlet on incentive funding, "Better Business for the Arts" cost £7,932. There is no scheme or pamphlet on "challenge training".

Visits and Entertainment (Costs)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the cost of *(a)* ministerial visits and *(b)* entertaining in his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Ministerial visits* £	*Ministerial entertaining* £
1984-85	9,514	5,219
1985-86	23,272	8,344
1986-87	18,030	3,931
1987-88	10,664	5,749

The figures include the related costs of staff in direct support of the Minister.

The Office of Arts and Libraries was established as an independent Department in July 1983 and corresponding figures for 1983-84 are not available.

Arts Council (Annual Report)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he expects the Arts Council to publish its annual report for 1987-88.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* In the autumn of 1988.

Arts Council

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on moneys in his grant to the Arts Council for 1988-89 which remain unallocated.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The sum of £140,795 is still to be allocated by the council.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Don Valley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many constituents in Don Valley will *(a)* benefit and *(b)* lose, when the Social Security Act 1986 comes into effect in April 1988 in the following categories *(a)* single pensioners under the age of 80 years, *(b)* single pensioners over the age of 80 years, *(c)* pensioner couples under the age of 80 years, *(d)* pensioner couples over the age of 80 years, *(e)* single unemployed under the age of 25 years, *(f)* single unemployed over the age of 25 years, *(g)* unemployed couples, *(h)* unemployed couples with children and *(i)* single parent families.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 12 April 1988, at column *122*.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average delay in publishing the monthly mortality figures.

Mrs. Currie: There has been no delay over the last year. Estimated numbers of deaths registered in four-weekly periods for England and Wales, and counties at age under one week, under one year and at all ages are published about seven weeks after the end of the period to which they relate. Similar weekly statistics for England and Wales only are published 11 days after the end of the period to which they relate (excepting public holidays). Both sets of figures are published currently in "OPCS Monitor" series WR "Registrar General's Weekly Return for England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library.

Abortions

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much National Health Service time each week is spent by *(a)* consultants and *(b)* nurses in carrying out abortions, and caring for the patients involved.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total number of abortions under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967 in the Pontefract health authority area for each of the last seven years for which figures are available; how many of these abortions were performed on ground four where there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped; and how many of these abortions were performed on ground five to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table.

Notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to usual residents of Pontefract health areas, by selected grounds 1980-86

Area of usual residence	*All grounds*	*Ground 4*	*Ground 5*
		(mentions)	
Eastern Health District of Wakefield AHA[1]			
1980	341	3	—
1981	383	7	1
1982	367	5	—
Pontefract District Health Authority			
1983	346	5	—
1984	339	3	—
1985	355	3	—
1986	408	10	—

[1] Conterminous with Pontefract District Health Authority.

AIDS

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much he intends to spend over the next three years on curbing the spread of infection of AIDS; and how much he expects to spend thereafter on the care of people with this disease.

Mr. Newton: We attach the highest priority to measures to stop the spread of HIV infection. This is the purpose of the public education campaign; the public health measures which have been taken; and why all health authorities have been asked to draw up plans for local action on AIDS and HIV. In 1988-89 the Government have allocated £10 million for further development of AIDS public education, including maintaining the national AIDS helpline. We have earmarked £58·6 million in 1988-89 to help develop preventive, counselling and diagnostic services and to make a contribution towards the cost of care and treatment in hospitals and the community.

In addition we expect to continue to provide support for voluntary agencies such as the Terrence Higgins Trust which carry out educational and counselling activities aimed at preventing the further spread of HIV infection.

Firm spending plans beyond 1988-89 will be decided following the forthcoming public expenditure survey.

Premature Babies (Deaths)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities in England and Wales, and where situated, have facilities of a special room set aside to help parents come to terms with the death of their premature baby, similar to room 5 of the special care baby unit at the Rosie maternity hospital, Cambridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally. The third report of the maternity services advisory committee titled "Care of the Mother and Baby" did however advise health authorities to provide such a private room for the parents of a baby likely to die soon after birth.

I am aware of the efforts being made in Cambridge to help parents come to terms with the grief of bereavement; such sensitive and kindly care is deeply appreciated by all concerned.

Orthotics Service

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department's report on its study of the arrangement for the delivery of the orthotics service, its efficiency and efficacy is to be published.

Mrs. Currie: The departmental team which conducted this study has not yet finalised its report. Decisions on publication will be taken when the final report has been completed.

Income Support

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people were receiving income support *(a)* nationally and *(b)* through each of his Department's local offices in Redcar, Eston, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool on Monday 11 April;

(2) how many people receiving income support on 11 April *(a)* nationally and *(b)* through each of his Department's local offices in Redcar, Eston, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool were also in receipt of transitional protection.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many retirement pensioners are in receipt of income support within the Wakefield metropolitan district; and how many of them are receiving a transitional addition.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available. Information on the number of claimants receiving income support will be available from the end of May.

Single Payment

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for his Department's offices at Cumbernauld *(a)* the number of single payment applications and *(b)* the number granted in each week for the first three months of the current year.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has only one office in Cumbernauld. Information in the form requested is not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Figures are however collected for the numbers of decisions made on single payment claims which represent full or partial awards of supplementary benefit in respect of the items claimed, and the numbers of decisions to refuse payment. These are given in the table for the first three complete four-weekly statistical periods in 1988. The figures are provisional and subject to revision.

	Full awards	*Partial awards*	*Refusals*	*Value £*
13 January to 9 February	644	35	299	42,864
10 February to 7 March	1,127	30	576	79,627
8 March to 8 April[1]	919	27	315	69,150

[1] Statistical period lengthened to align with the end of the supplementary benefit scheme.

Departmental Television Advertising

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many advertisements from his Department have been rejected by the Independent Broadcasting Authority for broadcast in the current year.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Waltham Forest (Ward Closures)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all temporary ward closures in Waltham Forest district by date of first closure; and if, in each case, he will indicate when the ward is expected to re-open, or when consultations on permanent closure are expected to commence.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of Waltham Forest health authority.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if payments from the Independent Living Fund will be disregarded when disabled people are being assessed for means-tested benefits.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby South, (Mrs. Beckett) on 12 April at columns *102-3*.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many applications to the Independent Living Fund have been received; and what arrangements there are to make grants to those people who fulfil the eligibility criteria;

(2) how the assessment of applicants to the Independent Living Fund is to be undertaken, and by whom.

Mr. Scott: The arrangements for assessing and making payments from the Independent Living Fund will be a matter for the trustees to decide when the fund is formally established. By the end of last week we had received eight completed application forms. A further 30 application forms had been sent out as a result of inquiries to the fund about specific individuals.

As an interim measure, officials, guided by professional advice, are making inquiries and carrying out assessments so that when the trust is formally established decisions can be taken swiftly. We shall look sympathetically at individual cases and, where appropriate, officials will arrange for payments in advance of the fund itself coming into operation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what stage negotiations to register the Independent Living Fund as a charity have reached.

Mr. Scott: Counsel is making the final adjustments to the draft trust deed which we shall then put to the charity commissioners for urgent consideration.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline the review procedure for applicants turned down by the Independent Living Fund.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 12 April at column 12.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the trustees of the Independent Living Fund are to be appointed; why they have not yet been appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Independent Living Fund's trust deed will provide that there will be up to 10 trustees of whom five may be appointed by the Secretary of State and five by the Disablement Income Group. I will announce the names when the fund is ready to be formally established.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether legislation will be introduced to disregard payments from the Independent Living Fund for the purposes of assessing housing benefit.

Mr. Scott: We plan to do so as soon as possible. The eligibility criteria for the fund, which I announced on 31 March in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) at columns *659-60*, contain a provision for the fund to make good any housing benefit reductions arising from payments by the fund, once the planned change to housing benefit legislation has taken effect.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistical basis was used by his Department when assessing the potential number of applicants to the Independent Living Fund.

Mr. Scott: The February 1986 sample of supplementary benefit cases indicated that there were some 250 people of all ages receiving domestic additions of more than £20 a week. However the sample for this group was very small, thus the figure has been taken only as a broad indication that the number of successful claims is likely to be counted in hundreds rather than thousands.

Electoral Register

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish for each English and Welsh constituency the numerical and percentage change of the number of people on the electoral register between February 1987 and February 1988.

Mrs. Currie: A table giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the 1985-based forecast for the expected percentage change of the number of people on the electoral register between mid-1987 and mid-1988 in *(a)* Wales, and *(b)* England.

Mrs. Currie: Forecasts of the changes in the number of people on the electoral register from one year to another are not prepared centrally. However the mid-1985-based projections of the resident population aged 17 years and over—which includes some people ineligible for electoral purposes—suggest that the percentage change between mid-1987 and mid-1988 would be approximately 0·5 per cent. for both Wales and England.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he expects the percentage increase to be of the number of people on the electoral register in *(a)* Wales, and *(b)* England for each of the next five years.

Mrs. Currie: The mid-1985 based projections of the resident population suggest the following changes over the next five years.

Mid year to mid year period	*Percentage increase in resident population aged 17+*
(a) *Wales*	
1987-88	0·5
1988-89	0·2
1989-90	0·2
1990-91	0·1
1991-92	0·0
1992-93	0·0
(b) *England*	
1987-88	0·5
1988-89	0·4
1989-90	0·3
1990-91	0·2
1991-92	0·1
1992-93	0·0

Emphysema

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the industrial injury advisory council's report on its investigation into emphysema among coal miners.

Mr. Scott: The council's report on bronchitis and emphysema will be published on 19 May 1988.

Look After Your Heart Campaign

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to increase spending on the Look After Your Heart campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Government funding of the Look After Your Heart campaign was £420,000 in 1986-87 and £1·5 million in 1987-88. We are increasing this further in 1988-89 to £1·8 million to which, in addition, the Health Education Authority will be contributing £2 million. We have a continuing commitment to this vital campaign, which aims, in the longer term, to bring about a significant reduction in the unacceptable level of premature death from coronary heart disease.

Heart Disease (Report)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of the recent recommendations of the national forum for coronary heart disease prevention report, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have read the recommendations of the national forum's report with interest. We are at present developing the second year of the Look After Your Heart campaign and will consider carefully the comprehensive and helpful suggestions the report makes. We have no plans to set up further committees as the report suggests.

Christie Hospital, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has any plans for the direct funding of Christie hospital, Manchester; what information he has as to how many patients come from outside the north-west region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There are no current plans to fund Christie hospital, Manchester directly. Information is not

held centrally on the number of patients who attend the hospital from outside North Western region. The right hon. Member may wish to raise that matter with the chairman of North Western regional health authority.

Surplus Land (North-West)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much surplus land and property has been sold by the North Western regional health authority; what sums were raised as a result; and how much further land and property held by the authority is surplus to requirement.

Mrs. Currie: All health authorities are encouraged to dispose of redundant land and buildings promptly. Information is not held centrally on the number of surplus land and property sites sold by North Western regional health authority, but revenue from sales over the last five-year period is given as:

	£
1982-83	599,762
1983-84	998,663
1984-85	1,978,761
1985-86	2,693,555
1986-87	8,768,675

There are approximately 10 land-property sites over 1 acre currently considered surplus to requirement. This figure may vary, however, depending on local service rationalisation decisions.

London (Staffing Shortages)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take following the survey undertaken by his Department's inspectorate on behalf of the Greater London branch of the Director of Social Services, entitled "London Workforce Survey —November 1987", concerned with staffing shortages in social services in the capital.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 26 April 1988 at column *127*.

Income Support (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in the week beginning 11 April in those of his Department's offices serving London or London postal districts *(a)* how many claimants had their conversion from supplementary benefit to income support completed, *(b)* how many claimants granted income support received a transitional addition and *(c)* what was the average amount of any transitional addition they received.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Departmental Offices (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of his Department's offices servicing London, or London postal districts, have been closed since 1 March as a result of *(a)* industrial action, *(b)* staff shortages and *(c)* other reasons.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of DHSS offices closed to the public for varying periods, in the London postal districts, and Greater London area since 1 March 1988 are:

(a) 34;
(b) Nil;
(c) 10.

Pathology Laboratories (Staffing)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the report, commissioned by the manpower planning advisory group, on staffing of pathology laboratories was received by the National Health Service management board; how and when he intends to publish its findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The report was considered by the manpower planning advisory group in February and referred by it to the National Health Service Management Board and regional chairmen. We intend to circulate the report to health authorities and others shortly.

War Disabled

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many war disabled have lost money through the recent housing benefit changes.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not available. However, the hon. Member will know that even after the recent changes, it is a matter for local authority discretion whether war pensions and war widows' pensions shall be disregarded in assessing income when calculating housing benefit entitlement.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce new proposals to exclude the war disabled from financial loss through housing benefit changes.

Mr. Portillo: War disabled claimants who have had their housing benefit reduced as a direct result of the housing benefit reforms, which took effect at the beginning of April this year, will receive transitional protection in the same way as other qualifying groups. Further details of the proposals announced on 27 April will be made available shortly.

Benefit Changes (Correspondence)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received regarding the changes in social security.

Mr. Portillo: Many, as indeed I have on most other issues concerning social security.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a break-down of the groups comprising the 10 per cent. of claimants said not to gain in cash terms as a result of the social security reforms.

Mr. Scott: Detailed estimates classified by family status and by client group may be found in tables 7A and 8A of "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" published in October 1987. Copies are available in the Library.

Housing Benefit Regulations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his statement in the House on 27 April, what estimate he has made of the administrative costs to local authorities of implementing the further proposed changes in housing benefit regulations; and if he will take steps to compensate local authorities for these additional costs.

Mr. Portillo: We intend to adjust the provision for local authorities' housing benefit administration costs to reflect the additional work arising from the changes announced on 27 April. We shall be discussing the work involved and the likely costs with the local authority associations.

Accident and Emergency Units (Closure)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 29 March, *Official Report*, column 751, he will make it his policy not to refer hon. Members to chairmen of district health authorities when answering questions on the closure of accident and emergency units.

Mrs. Currie: The provision of health services in England is the responsibility of 190 district health authorities and 90 family practitioner committees which are best placed to determine local priorities and needs. In questions regarding detail of individual hospital services, referral to the district health authority chairman is usually the most appropriate and efficient way to answer the questions of hon. Members.

Social Security Agreements (Reciprocal Arrangements)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the countries *(a)* with which there are reciprocal social security agreements; *(b)* in which British emigrant pensioners receive regular uprating of pensions in line with the United Kingdom; and if he is considering arranging an agreement to include Canada in the latter category.

Mr. Scott: The United Kingdom has reciprocal social security agreements with the following countries. British emigrant pensioners receive regular uprating of pensions in line with those in the United Kingdom in all these countries except for those marked with an asterisk.

Australia*
Austria
Belgium
Bermuda
Canada*
Cyprus
Denmark
Finland
France
Federal Republic of Germany
Gibraltar
Greece
Iceland
Republic of Ireland
Isle of Man
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Jersey and Guernsey
Luxembourg
Malta
Mauritius
Netherlands
New Zealand*
Norway*
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
United States of America
Yugoslavia

United Kingdom pension upratings are also paid to pensioners living in Sark by virtue of a provision of the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1973.

Canadian and United Kingdom officials have discussed the possibility of revising the agreement between the two countries so that pension increases would be payable. However, to pay full United Kingdom pensions to all British pensioners in Canada would cost an additional £41 million a year. In view of the substantial costs involved I cannot say when we shall be able to make further progress towards a revised agreement.

Midwives

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of trained midwives in *(a)* England, *(b)* Leeds Eastern health authority and *(c)* Leeds Western health authority for each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Newton: The figures requested are shown in the table. Figures for 30 September 1986 are the latest available to this level of detail.

NHS qualified midwives[1] at 30 September of each year
Whole-time equivalent[2]

	England	*Leeds Eastern health authority*	*Leeds Western health authority*
1983	17,316	135	114
1984	17,832	145	119
1985	18,431	157	120
1986	18,850	149	123

[1] Excludes learners and agency staff.
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.
Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Retail Prices Index (Error)

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if any decisions have yet been made on the disbursement of money to charities following the error in the retail price index.

Mr. Scott: The balance remaining out of the saving attributable to the RPI error in the social security uprating is £7·5 million after allowing for the compensatory payments to individual beneficiaries. This sum will be paid to charities whose activities broadly benefit those groups affected by the error. The sum available to charities in England is £6·4 million. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Wales will be making separate announcements about their own arrangements.

I have received many offers of help with the disbursement of these funds and requests for a share of the available money. After careful consideration and consultation with representatives of voluntary organisations I have decided to allocate just over £4 million direct

to individual voluntary organisations for specific purposes. These organisations are listed at table A together with the amounts it is proposed they should receive.

In addition we will be discussing with three generalist organisations arrangements for the disbursement of a further £2 million of funding to local voluntary bodies. The three organisations concerned are listed at table B together with the amounts it is proposed they should receive. It is envisaged that these charities will be better placed to fund local organisations working within the particular fields of the groups of claimants who it has not been possible to compensate.

A further public statement will be made shortly about the arrangements for local voluntary organisations who are not listed at table A to apply for funding.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has today made an announcement on the allocation of moneys to public service charities in respect of the RPI error.

Table A

Organisation	*Grant (£)*
Unemployed	
The Unemployment Unit Charitable Trust	10,000
The Rainer Foundation	58,000
Parent Support Groups	
Nippers-National Information for Parents of Prematures: Education, Resources and Support	10,000
Sands—Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society	10,000
Child Accident Prevention Trust	10,500
Parent's Lifeline	5,000
Disabled	
Motability	190,000
SENSE	500,000
RNID	200,000
Foundation for Conductive Education	30,000
Muscular Dystrophy Group	70,000
Ann Verney Training Services	70,000
Disabled Living Foundation	101,500
National Deaf-Blind Helpers' League	25,000
Partially Sighted Society	20,000
St. Elizabeth's (Epilepsy)	8,000
RADAR	40,000
Brittle Bone Society	8,000
Disability Alliance	5,000
Dial UK	5,000
ADA (Action for Dysphasic Adults)	10,000
Elmore Committee Project	186,000
MENCAP Homes Foundation	75,000
Dr. Barnardo's	55,000
Contact a Family	10,000
Home Farm Trust	30,000
Forest and Gardens Ltd.	10,000
Motor Neurone Disease Association	15,000
AFASIC	25,000
CRUSE	15,000
Elderly	
Age Concern	200,000
The National Osteoporosis Society	20,000
EXTEND	10,000
Age Exchange Theatre Trust	5,000
The Employment Fellowship	5,000
Help the Aged	55,000
University Settlement Bristol Community Association	20,000
Centre for Policy on Ageing	20,000
Single Parents	
Gingerbread	175,000
Home Start	180,000
Child Care	35,000
WRVS Trust	20,000
National Out of School Alliance	130,000
National Council for One Parent Families	250,000
Drugs and Solvent	
Turning Point	150,000
Alcohol	
Alcohol Concern	100,000
Medical and Research Organisations	
National Cancer Charities	100,000
Cancer Relief MacMillan Fund	150,000
Association for Emergency Medical Technicians	10,000
Brain Damage Research Trust	20,000
Battered Women	
Women's Aid Federation	75,000
Homeless	
West End Co-Ordinated Voluntary Services for Single Homeless People	150,000
Community Service	
Community Service Volunteers	200,000
St. John Ambulance	10,000
Family Organisations	
Family Welfare Association	25,000
Family Holiday Association	25,000
Ethnic Minorities	
Health Information Trust	50,000
King's Fund Centre	50,000

Table B

	Grant (£)
Delegated Funding	
NCVO	400,000
Charities Aid Foundation	775,000
ITV Telethon Trust	1,000,000

Housing Benefit

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a regional breakdown of the number of claimants whose housing benefit will not be restored as a result of the transitional arrangements announced on 27 April.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how it is intended to inform claimants that they will now have some of their housing benefit restored; and whether his Department's local offices will write direct to claimants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how long the transitional period will last in respect of those who will have some of their housing benefit restored; and whether any distinction will be made after the transitional period between claimants who will then lose housing benefit at different rates;

(3) from what date housing benefit will be restored to claimants during the transitional period; and how soon individuals will be informed directly of the position.

Mr. Portillo: We will be making a further announcement shortly.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants who have savings in excess

of £3,000 have lost some of their housing benefit; whether he will now raise the capital sum at which benefit begins to be reduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not available. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 27 April, the upper limit for capital will be increased for housing benefit to £8,000, but the lower level remains at £3,000.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to make an oral statement to the House before any further changes are made in the transitional arrangements regarding housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No.

National Childbirth Trust

Sir Geoffry Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *177-78*, he will state, in the light of his Department's continuous funding of the National Childbirth Trust since 1977-78, what particular difficulties have arisen which have led to a delay of seven months since September 1987 in reaching a decision on the trust's application for a further three years' funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We receive many requests for section 64 funding and each application has to be carefully examined. The National Childbirth Trust's is currently being dealt with in conjunction with a number of others. The financial position of the trust has altered since its last award. We hope to announce the decision shortly.

Medical Compensation Scheme

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions have taken place between his officials and the BMA about a pilot scheme for a medical compensation scheme since the Attorney-General's reply to the Adjournment debate on 16 December, *Official Report* column 1214.

Mrs. Currie: Officials met the BMA at the association's request in January. No firm proposal for a pilot scheme was put forward by the BMA. The representatives of the BMA were advised that some of their concern about cost and slowness in clearing actions through the courts was likely to be met by the civil justice review and that no "no fault compensation" scheme would be considered until the outcome of that review is known.

Medical Equipment and Telephone Systems (Rental)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards district health authorities renting medical equipment or telephone systems or creating a capital fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The National Health Service may employ renting for such items but only where it represents best overall value for money to the Exchequer as a whole. The full costs of renting must be shown to be lower than outright purchase and the Department's and, in most cases, the Treasury's approval is required. Health authorities derive capital funding from the Exchequer (and the sale of surplus property) on an annual basis.

Hospital Waiting List (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the waiting time by speciality and by individual consultant for patients to be seen by consultants in the Nottingham district health authority for their initial examination having been referred by their general practitioner.

Mr. Newton: Information on out-patient waiting times is not collected centrally.

NHS Managers (Performance Awards)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield of 21 April, how many of the performance awards paid to National Health Service managers in the Yorkshire regional health authority area related to their achievement of hospital or ward closures.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Information about the objectives set for individual district and unit general managers is not held centrally. It is however highly unlikely that any such awards are in the form suggested by the hon. Member, since planned hospital or ward closures will normally be part of wider objectives in improving the use of resources or developing new patterns of service, and performance criteria will be related to the achievement of these wider objectives.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Safety

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Her Majesty's Government propose to implement the undertaking given in December 1980 by the then Secretary of State for the Home Department to issue a national advisory standard on fire safety in houses of multiple occupation.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office plans to publish the final version of the national advisory standard for England and Wales later this year.

Driving Offences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions for each of the last three years for (i) driving without due care and attention under section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 and (ii) failing to have proper control over a vehicle under regulation 104 of the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986; and if he will express the figures as a percentage change for each of the years.

Mr. John Patten: The available information on offences under section 3 of the 1972 Act relates to proceedings and findings of guilt at magistrates courts and is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table 5 of the issues for 1984 to 1986, the latest available), copies of which are in the Library. For offences under regulation 104 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 and corresponding earlier legislation, proceedings were recorded in respect of 733 alleged offences in the magistrates' courts in 1986, 622 of which

resulted in a finding of guilt; equivalent figures for 1984 and 1985 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. As from 1 October 1986, offences under regulation 104 may be dealt with by means of a fixed penalty notice, but the information collected centrally does not separately distinguish offences under regulation 104 from other careless driving offences.

Right of Entry

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the categories of officials by Department entitled to statutory right of entry to private property.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I can, however, assure my hon. Friend that the Government are concerned that statutory rights of entry should not be created unnecessarily. A systematic review of powers of entry by public officials was completed in 1981. As a result of the review, Ministers recommended that 30 powers should be revoked and up to 63 modified. Following the review, the Government instituted arrangements which provide for the Department to scrutinise centrally all new proposals to provide new legal powers of entry in order to ensure that they are fully justified and that they do not impose an undue burden on those who will be affected by them.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether police officers who work with personal data used for a purpose associated with national security are instructed to ignore the code of practice which relates to personal data used for police purposes.

Mr. Hurd: The code of practice issued by the Association of Chief Police Officers explains the circumstances in which personal data are exempt from the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why a code of practice for personal data used for national security purposes, similar to the code for personal data used for police purposes, will not be introduced.

Mr. Hurd: For the reason I gave in reply to an earlier question from the hon. Member on 9 March at column *195*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend section 28 of the Data Protection Act to cover data gathered in the course of community charge collection.

Mr. Renton: No.

Part-time Firemen

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of the number of part-time firemen *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* nationally; what their average remuneration per week is; and what assessment he has made of the effect of recent social security changes on the benefits of part-time firemen.

Mr. John Patten: As at 1 January 1988 there were 1,583 retained firefighters in Wales, and 16,896 nationally, excluding Northern Ireland; no information is available centrally regarding their average remuneration. The effect on the benefits of retained firefighters of the recent changes in social security legislation announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will vary with the circumstances of individual claimants.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on how he intends to curb the spread of drug misuse in Britain; and what resources and advice will be made available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government continue to develop their comprehensive strategy to attack the supply of and demand for drugs by devoting resources to action on five fronts:

—international efforts to reduce supplies from abroad;
—strengthening enforcement by police and customs;
—maintaining effective deterrents and tight domestic controls;
—developing preventive education and publicity;
—improving treatment and rehabilitation.

This strategy is co-ordinated by the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, which I chair, and is set out in our publication "Tackling Drug Misuse", which we shall shortly be reissuing.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 21 April, *Official Report*, column *525*, he will indicate the sections of the Firearms Act 1968 to which he had regard in relation to his Department's definition of the term class of firearm.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I was referring to the provisions of the Act generally, according to context.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley police as to whether the Thames Valley police *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received written confirmation as to the status of the late Michael Ryan's membership of the Wiltshire shooting centre in connection with his application dated 14 July 1987 for a variation to his firearms certificate;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the Thames Valley police standard inquiry letter form sent by the chief constable to firearms club secretaries when he inquires into the membership status of applicants who have completed and submitted to him a firearms form 1 for the grant renewal and variation of firearms certificates.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his earlier question on 31 March 1988 at column *691*.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police force as to on what dates and by police officers of what ranks acting as crime prevention officers visits were made to the house of the late Michael Ryan between 2 April and 30 April 1987 for the purpose of inquiries regarding the applications he made in relation to his firearms certificate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to his earlier question on 31 March 1988 at column *690*. I understand from the chief constable of Thames Valley that the report of the crime prevention officer dated 27 April 1987 does not specify the dates of the visits made.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police force as to when the chief constable's policy of a requirement for the successful completion of a minimum six-month probationary period before an applicant for a firearm certificate may be considered for the grant of such a certificate was introduced, and as to any changes there may have been in that policy subsequently.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Thames Valley that no such policy has been introduced.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what disciplinary action he has taken or intends to take in respect of the inaccuracy of the evidence given at the inquest held in connection with the Hungerford murders by Thomas Alfred Warlow, a forensic scientist attached to the Home Office forensic science laboratory at Huntingdon, on the composition and special qualities of the 7·62x 39 bullets fired by the late Michael Ryan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None; I am not aware of any matters that would justify disciplinary action.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police force as to the names of which *(a)* clubs and *(b)* ranges the police constable wrote on the Thames Valley police form FIR 25(9/74) following the officer's visit to the house of the late Michael Ryan (i) on 30 November 1986 in response to his interview in connection with the receipt of the firearms form 1 application dated 23 November 1986 for the grant of a firearm certificate and (ii) on 28 March 1987 and 25 July 1987 in response to his interview in connection with the receipt of the firearms form 1 application dated 23 March and 14 July respectively; and, in each case, what additional answers the police constable wrote to the following numbered questions on form (5) have reasons why the applicant wishes to acquire or possess the firearm(s)/ammunition been verified?, and (6) with whom have they been verified? and (8) if for use with approved club, give details of range and current membership.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. It is not the practice to disclose the contents of reports obtained by the police for operational use.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police force as to which *(a)* clubs and *(b)* ranges, the late Michael Ryan gave in completing section 14,

"reasons for requiring each of the firearms and ammunition specified",

and section 15,

"where do you intend to use each of the firearms specified",

when requesting authority to possess firearms on his firearms form 1 applications dated *(a)* 23 November 1986, *(b)* 23 March 1987 and *(c)* 14 July 1987 for the grant of, or variation to, his firearm certificate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not the practice to disclose the contents of reports obtained by the police for operational use. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to his question of 31 March 1988 at column *692*.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police force to list for which firearm permission was subsequently granted by the chief constable to the late Michael Ryan as a result of his firearms form 1 certificates on his applications for the variation of a firearms certificate on his applications dated *(a)* 23 March 1987 and *(b)* 14 July 1987;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police force as to what firearms the late Michael Ryan requested authority to possess on his firearms form 1 application for the variation of a firearms certificate from the chief constable on his application dated *(a)* 23 March and *(b)* 14 July 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Thames Valley that Michael Ryan requested and was granted authority to hold in respect of *(a)* a ·22 pistol and a ·32 pistol and *(b)* a 7·62 rifle and a ·30 calibre carbine.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police as to what is stated in his force's standing orders and amendments to standing orders for the period *(a)* 23 November 1986 to July 1987 and *(b)* July 1987 to the current date, in respect of the minimum probationary period required to establish the bonafides of applicants for the (i) grant, (ii) variation and (iii) renewal of firearms certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. It is not the practice to disclose the contents of documents used for operational purposes by the police.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley police as to whether Mrs. Vickers of the Police Complaints Authority has submitted requests for files and papers to the chief constable of Thames Valley police in the course of investigations into events *(a)* leading up to and *(b)* involving the shootings by the late Michael Ryan on 19 August 1987 and as to what response the chief constable has made to such requests, giving dates on which any such material was received by Mrs. Vickers: and if he will indicate the dates on which Mrs. Vickers has had to make any repeat requests for such material; and whether any such requests for such material have been refused or not yet complied with.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question on 22 April at column *593*. I understand that the Police Complaints Authority is entirely satisfied with the co-operation which it is receiving from the Thames Valley police.

Police-School Liaison

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what actions he has taken on the recommendations of the teachers' association, Police Federation joint working party report on police—school liaison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government welcome co-operation between the teaching profession and the police as reflected in this report. Liaison between police and schools is important, not only for education itself but for the prevention of crime and for maintaining the essential relationship of trust and confidence between the police and the public.

The report covers very similar ground to that covered by a report produced jointly by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Society of Education Officers in 1986. The Government circulated this report to all schools and police forces. The Home Office and the Department of Education and Science have work in hand to identify and disseminate examples of good practice in police-schools liaison. The Home Office is financing a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of various methods of police-schools liaison and Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools has begun an examination of good practice in a number of local education authorities.

The arrangements for police-schools liaison need to be developed locally. We understand that since the publication of the 1986 report local working parties have been set up in many areas to develop joint police-schools programmes.

Identity Cards

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what cost-benefit analysis has been made, in relation to the possible introduction of universal identity cards analagous to those in force in other countries, of the likely expenditure set against the implications for the convenience and protection of the public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such analysis has been undertaken. That would, in itself, be an expensive exercise and we have no reason to think the practical benefits to be obtained from the introduction of a universal identity card system would be commensurate with what would undoubtedly be the substantial cost of introducing it. No difficulties emerged when national identity cards were withdrawn in 1952, and the police have not asked for their reintroduction.

Passports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year since 1979 the number of *(a)* passports lost, *(b)* passport applications lost and *(c)* birth certificates lost (i) in the London passport office and (ii) in all the passport offices.

Mr. Renton: The table shows the number of passports lost in transit to the applicant, and not recovered, in each financial year since 1984, when the Home Office assumed responsibility for passport issuing in the United Kingdom. Instances of passports, applications and other documents going astray within a passport office are not separately recorded, but they are conparatively rare. Lost passports and documents submitted in support of passport applications are replaced free of charge to the applicant.

Passports Lost in Post (Not Recovered)

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
London	167	80	80	78
Liverpool	224	222	243	195
Peterborough	133	109	117	69
Newport	108	120	95	70
Glasgow	32	30	29	17
Belfast	3	8	10	13
Total	667	569	574	442

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year since 1979 the number of letters received by Home Secretaries from hon. Members concerning cases of poor service from passport offices.

Mr. Renton: The number of letters on passport matters received from hon. Members since 1 April 1984, when the Home Office assumed responsibility for passport issuing in the United Kingdom, is as follows:

Year	*Letters*
1984 (April-December)	186
1985	184
1986	238
1987	433

An analysis of the letters by subject matter is not readily available, but the increases during the last two years are largely attributable to letters expressing concern about the standard of service. The large increase in 1987 is primarily attributable to the increased delays following industrial action over pay in the early summer.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year since 1979 the average period between receipt of a passport application and provision of a passport by *(a)* the London passport office and *(b)* all passport offices.

Mr. Renton: The table shows the maximum and minimum delays in processing correctly completed non-urgent passport applications occurring in each financial year since 1984, when the Home Office assumed responsibility for passport issuing in the United Kingdom.

Maximum and minimum delay times (working days)

	1984-85		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*	
	Maximum	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*
London	16	2	20	6	36	11	72	20
Liverpool	12	2	22	1	14	2	38	2
Peterborough	10	1	13	2	12	3	26	5
Newport	10	1	17	1	31	3	56	4
Glasgow	14	2	16	2	33	4	51	6
Belfast	3	1	4	1	4	2	7	2

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of passport applications *(a)* to the London passport office and *(b)* to all passport offices.

Mr. Renton: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table shows the number of new passports issued and amendments made to existing passports in each financial year since 1984, when the Home Office assumed responsibility for passport issuing in the United Kingdom.

Output-All passport services

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
London	553,412	575,982	574,041	484,048
Liverpool	539,337	545,293	707,256	675,513
Peterborough	464,525	500,570	595,377	585,034
Newport	429,849	438,087	524,344	556,468
Glasgow	163,427	163,007	201,383	184,289
Belfast	54,169	57,380	69,993	79,398
Total	2,204,719	2,280,319	2,672,394	2,564,750

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements exist at ports to forestall the use of passports lost by passport offices.

Mr. Renton: Security features are incorporated in United Kingdom passports to ensure that any attempts to facilitate their use by another person, through alteration of personal details or substitution of photographs, will be readily apparent on examination of the document at United Kingdom ports of entry.

Passport Offices (Staff)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of staff employed at *(a)* the London passport office and *(b)* all passport offices.

Mr. Renton: The table shows the authorised complement of permanent staff and the peak monthly total of casual staff employed in each financial year since 1984, when the Home Office assumed responsibility for passport issuing in the United Kingdom.

Permanent staff numbers [authorised complement] (+ maximum number of casuals)

	1984-85		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*	
	1	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*
London[1]	300	(+52)	301	(+35)	296	(+47)	301	(+50)
Liverpool	206	(+27)	206	(+14)	206	(+32)	206	(+49)
Peterborough	169	(+23)	169	(+28)	169	(+34)	169	(+43)
Newport	170	(+20)	170	(+24)	169	(+31)	169	(+51)
Glasgow	83	(+12)	83	(+13)	83	(+18)	83	(+26)
Belfast	15	(+6)	15	(+6)	15	(+6)	15	(+5)
Total	943	(+140)	944	(+120)	938	(+168)	943	(+224)

[1] Includes Headquarters staff.
Column 1 shows the authorised complement of permanent staff.
Column 2 shows the highest number of casual staff in post in any month.

Police Informers

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what Home Office guidelines exist for police authorities or regional crime squads for rewarding informants *(a)* who are suspected of having committed a related criminal offence and *(b)* who are not so suspected;

(2) what percentage of all public funds spent on rewarding informants with knowledge of drug-smuggling operations is provided out of *(a)* national and *(b)* local funds;

(3) to what extent police forces provide protection and livelihood for police informants after they have finished co-operating with the police; and whether such protection and livelihood is arranged outside Britain;

(4) what sum is set aside each year by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* police authorities by authority for the rewarding of informants with knowledge of drug-smuggling operations;

(5) what amount of public funds was spent on rewarding drug informants for information in each year from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no central fund for the payment of informants and information about payments to informants in relation to drug smuggling offences is not available. The handling, protection and payment of informants are operational matters for the chief officer of the force concerned. General guidance about the use of informants by the police is included in the consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters (paragraph 1.92), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many successful seizures of drugs have taken place following information supplied to police by informants during each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many drug-related arrests have been made following information supplied to authorities by informants in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that photocopies of passports and other documents sent to his Department by those applying to register as British citizens are made and retained by the Home Office in order to avoid further delays in processing applications.

Mr. Renton: No. Passports and documents submitted with the applications for registration received before 31

December 1987, which were the subject of my statement on 16 February, at column *863*, have already been returned.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether passports and other documents, sent to his Department by those applying to register as British citizens, are being returned to the home addresses of applicants by recorded delivery in all cases; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why 19 passports and other documentation relating to various applications to the Home Office were sent from Lunar house, Croydon, in an OHMS envelope, which was badly torn, and not posted by recorded delivery, on 18 April, to the offices of the Bradford Council for Voluntary Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The normal practice is to return passports and documents by recorded delivery post. The cases in question cannot be identified from particulars given, but if the hon. Member will provide further details, I will investigate the matter.

Mortgage Fraud

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation or take other steps to tackle mortgage fraud.

Mr. John Patten: No. There is no reason to suppose that police powers and the existing criminal law are inadequate for this purpose.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any information on increases in mortgage fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I am aware that the fraud squad of the Metropolitan police has set up a special team to deal with this matter.

Nationality

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* adult registration, *(b)* registration of minors and *(c)* naturalisation were (i) received and (ii) granted by the nationality division of his Department for each month from April 1987.

Mr. Renton: The following is the information available for applications for British citizenship made under the British Nationality Act 1981 received in case-working groups in the nationality division and granted for each month from April 1987 to March 1988.

British Nationality Act 1981: Applications received

Date	*Adult registrations*	*Minor registrations*	*Naturalisations*
1987			
April	2,649	473	430
May	1,394	500	2,401
June	2,003	610	2,256
July	3,985	781	1,773
August	4,669	1,008	2,939
September	4,007	873	2,190
October	4,397	878	2,282
November	9,495	1,782	4,235
December	,890	863	1,690
1988			
January	10,591	1,161	2,305
February	8,611	716	1,899
March	12,451	1,306	3,777

Note: These figures do not take account of some 190,000 cases which have been received in Lunar house but not yet received in the case-working groups.

British Nationality Act 1981: Applications granted

Date	*Adult registration*	*Minor registration*	*Naturalisations*
1987			
April	1,990	539	982
May	2,742	619	1,224
June	3,234	855	1,347
July	3,178	852	1,361
August	2,737	541	1,251
September	2,956	649	1,488
October	3,047	595	1,607
November	3,307	626	1,752
December	4,102	624	1,686
1988			
January	5,149	706	1,518
February	4,370	485	1,115
March	3,749	444	1,077

Note: All figures are provisional.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what income the nationality division of his Department received in nationality fees in each month since April 1987.

Mr. Renton: For the required information in respect of 1987, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 11 January 1988 at column *11*.

Fees received, net of refunds to unsuccessful applicants during January to March 1988, were as follows:

1988	£
January	1,335,057
February	1,523,734
March	[1]3,282,369

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the budgeted cost and *(b)* the actual cost of processing nationality applications in the nationality division of his Department during 1987-88.

Mr. Renton: The processing of citizenship applications is required to be self-financing. The budgeted costs per case therefore equate to the fees charged. The outturn costs for 1987-88 are not yet available but will be published in due course.

Concessionary Television Licences (Glanford)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will receive a delegation from the Glanford borough council, led by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, to discuss Glanford borough council's application for concessionary television licences.

Mr. Renton: I shall be glad to do so.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what period of time he expects to take to reach a decision on Glanford borough council's application for concessionary television licences for pensioners living in council accommodation.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend hopes to do so within the next few weeks.

Police National Computer

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the operational requirement for the replacement police national computer has yet been issued to potential suppliers; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Hurd: The operational requirement for the replacement police national computer has now been issued to all interested suppliers, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Coaches

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many coach drivers have been prosecuted for dangerous driving following the discharge of their passengers into the middle of the road on Westminster bridge and as to what steps he intends to ensure adequate parking restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hogg: I am advised by the commissioner that there is no record of prosecutions having been brought in such circumstances. The Metropolitan police would take suitable enforcement action if offences came to light. The imposition of parking restrictions is a matter for the local authority concerned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Rating Reform

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the petitions which have been presented in the House for and against the introduction of the poll tax in Scotland since June 1987.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows. All the petitions were presented against the introduction of the community charge in Scotland.

21 October 1987
Provost and Councillors of Dunfermline District Council (F)
22 October 1987
Residents of Hamilton (F)
3 November 1987
Gilmerton Branch of the Scottish Old Age Pensioners' Association (F)
9 November 1987
East Kilbride Constituency (F)
10 November 1987
Citizens of Kilmarnock and Loudon
12 November 1987
Provost and Councillors of Dunfermline District Council (F)
17 November 1987
Residents of the Uists and Benbecula (F)
23 November 1987
Students and staff of Coatbridge College, Monklands West (F)
24 November 1987
Citizens of the U.K. (F)
30 November 1987
Residents of Lennoxtown (F)
2 December 1987
Members of Park Community Council (F)
16 December 1987
Constituents of Govan (F)
16 December 1987
Provost and Councillors and residents of Cumbernauld (F)
18 December 1987
James Watson and others
14 January 1988
Residents of Tranent (F)
19 January 1988
Royal Burgh of Haddington (F)
25 January 1988
Members of East Lothian District Council (F)
26 January 1988
Glasgow, Rutherglen (F)
2 February 1988
Residents of the Western Isles (F)
2 February 1988
Cumnock: National Association of Widows (F)
2 February 1988
S. McColgan and others (F)
2 February 1988
Prestonpans Labour Party Club (F)
10 February 1988
Members of Tayside Regional Council (F)
10 February 1988
Residents of Constituency of Livingston
18 February 1988
Residents of Constituency of Falkirk West and others
24 February 1988
7/131 Branch of T.G.W.U. (F)
24 February 1988
Residents of Burgh of Cockenzie and Port Seton (F)
8 March 1988
Residents of Musselburgh, East Lothian (F)
9 March 1988
Citizens of Central Glasgow
11 March 1988
Constituents of Dumbarton (F)
21 March 1988
Edinburgh branch of Transport Salaried Staffs Association
20 April 1988
Residents of Glasgow, Springburn (F)
21 April 1988
Ratepayers and residents in Motherwell District Council (F)
27 April 1988
Residents of Central Edinburgh
Note: (F) = Formally presented.

Legislation

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the Bills that have been introduced since October 1987 by Departments and the number of hours of parliamentary time devoted thereto at each stage.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is as follows:

Hours of Consideration

Bill	*Department*	*Second Reading*	*Committee*	*Report*[1]	*Third Reading*	*Lords Amendment*
Social Security	DHSS	6·34	43·30	11·31	0·48	3·03
Employment	Employment	4·34	55·24	12·41	0·49	—
Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits)	Environment	6·13	1·40	1·25	0·47	—
Licencing	Home	5·37	22·43	6·24	—	3·15
Immigration	Home	6·02	50·33	5·05	0·24	—
Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency	FCO	2·40	0·20	—	0·26	—
Housing	Environment	8·20	102·23	—	—	—
Education Reform	DES	6·37	151·15	22·30	2·16	—
Health and Medicines	DHSS	6·15	63·30	12·18	—	—
Local Government Finance	Environment	12·07	128·52	29·08	1·14	—
Housing (Scotland)	Scottish Office	5·32	73·27	10·45	—	—
Criminal Justice *[Lords]*	Home	6·23	79·07	—	—	—
Firearms (Amendment)	Home	6·39	25·32	—	—	—
Regional Development Grants (Termination)	Environment	5·43	17·03	—	3·02	—
Merchant Shipping *[Lords]*	Transport	3·53	16·32	5·30	—	—
Farm Land and Rural Development *[Lords]*	MAFF	3·18	11·04	—	—	—
British Steel	Trade and Industry	5·27	[2]57·20	—	—	—
School Boards (Scotland)	Scottish Office	6·14	[2]7·30	—	—	—
Finance (No. 2)	Treasury	6·12	—	—	—	—
Copyright Designs and Patents *[Lords]*	Trade and Industry	5·25	—	—	—	—
Committee of the Whole House						
Income and Corporation Taxes *[Lords]*	Lord Chancellors Department	0·04	—	0·24	—	—
Welsh Development Agency	Welsh Office	2·53	[3]1·51	—	—	—

[1] Report includes Third Reading where no substandial debate took place.
[2] Indicates stage not completed.
[3] Includes remaining stages.

Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Affairs

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much debating time was allocated to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish affairs in 1986-87; and what legislation relating exclusively to each region was brought forward.

Mr. Wakeham: Excluding questions, the time allowed in session 1986-87 for debate of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish affairs was as follows:

	Time
Scottish	28 hours
Welsh	9 hours 48 minutes
Northern Ireland	26 hours 8 minutes

During that period seven Bills were introduced relating solely to Scotland; one Bill related exclusively to Northern Ireland; and none related exclusively to Wales. With regard to secondary legislation, the Secretary of State for Wales presented 12 statutory instruments, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland one statutory instrument, and the Secretary of State for Scotland 111 statutory instruments. In addition, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland brought forward 15 Orders in Council for consideration by the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 May 1988

WALES

Lambs (Mutation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research is being undertaken into the mutation of lambs born in the restricted area in north Wales since the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Scientific and veterinary advice indicates that the level of Chernobyl contamination presents no health hazard to sheep and will have no effect on their fertility and breeding potential.

Congenital defects in lambs may be caused by a variety of factors including viral infections and nutritional deficiencies. There is no evidence that lambs born in the north Wales restricted area have a higher incidence of congenital defects than lambs born elsewhere.

I understand that a research project by Liverpool university into the effects of low levels of radiation on sheep is utilising sheep supplied by farmers in north Wales.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Javelin Missiles

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether Short Brothers has made any applications or inquiries regarding an export licence from the sale of Javelin anti-aircraft missiles to the Government of Chile.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not the practice to comment on individual defence equipment export matters.

Central Heating Oil

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer the price differential for bulk storage kerosene based central heating oil charged by different classes of supplies to the Office of Fair Trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: No. The price of standard grade kerosene for use in central heating systems is set by the costs of supply and the level of competition in the market. If the hon. Gentleman has any concern about lack of competition in this market, he should put it to the Director General of Fair Trading.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures his Department is taking to seek to increase the gross domestic product per head in the regions of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department offers a range of incentives under its recently launched enterprise initiative, which are designed to encourage self-generating growth in all regions of the country.

Director General of Telecommunications (Report)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has yet received a report by the Director General of Telecommunications for the year 1987, as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. The fourth report by the Director General of Telecommunications is being published today. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1987. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

PRIME MINISTER

Defence Equipment Manufacturers (Retired Officers)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the rules which affect the employment by defence equipment manufacturers of Royal Naval officers of flag rank, and their equivalents in the Royal Marines, the British Army and the Royal Air Force, following their retirement from Her Majesty's forces; and what specific rules affect senior officers who been engaged in procurement policy.

The Prime Minister: All service officers are required to seek approval prior to accepting an appointment with a defence related business. Particularly senior officers are required to do so before accepting any appointment. The requirement extends for a period of two years after each retirement or resignation. Each application is examined in the light of the circumstances of the proposed appointments including the extent of his involvement in procurement policy. Approval may be withheld for a period of up to two years or some other restriction imposed, including limitations on the areas of work where the individual may be employed.

European Community (Beef)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the current practice of offering beef for sale abroad by subsidy at prices low enough to enable it to be sent back to the United Kingdom at prices lower than are available to home producers; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Community agreed a reform to the beef support policy in December 1986 which cut the common support level by some 15 per cent. The Commission's proposals for agricultural prices for 1988-89 envisage a further cut and the beef regime is to be further revised this year in the light of the recent decisions of the European Council. As these steps and the measures which have been applied in the milk sector come into full effect the need to make costly disposals of surplus beef on world markets will decline. Meanwhile, the EC Commission has recognised the need to ensure that additional supplies of beef are available to the Community meat processing industry on terms that enable the Community production to be competitive with processed products from other sources.

ENERGY

Electricity Board Chairmen

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the electricity board area chairmen; and what subjects he hopes to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the area board chairmen from time to time to discuss a number of issues of common interest.

British Coal

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Sizewell B

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the Advisory Council on Science and Technology's report on the industrial impact of Sizewell B.

Mr. Parkinson: I have placed in the Library of the House today a copy of a letter I have written to Sir Francis Tombs, the chairman of the advisory council, responding to points raised in the council's report.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Postal Centres International Ltd.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Attorney-General if the Crown Prosecution Service has yet reached a decision on whether to prosecute the directors and others in connection with the alleged fraud by Postal Centres International Ltd. of Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No papers in relation to this matter have been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service. The liquidators appointed to handle the affairs of the company in liquidation have not reported finding evidence of any criminal offences.

Legal Aid Board

Mr. Jack: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor is able to announce when he will be appointing to the proposed Legal Aid Board; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has today appointed John Pitts, who retired last year as chairman and chief executive of the Tioxide Group, to be chairman of the proposed Legal Aid Board, and the following to be members:

Martin Acland
Diana Beale
Allan Blake
Hilary Bradley
Lyn Devonald
Kenneth Farrow
Suzette Harold
Geoffrey Hibbert
David Sinker
John Smith
Peter Soar

The Lord Chancellor regards it as important that the board should have adequate time in which to prepare for taking over responsibility for those functions currently exercised by the legal aid administration of the Law Society. The Lord Chancellor intends that this transfer should take place early in 1989. The appointments are, of course, contingent on the Legal Aid Bill's receiving the approval of Parliament.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers and Ancillary Staff (Vetting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has in relation to the number of teachers and ancillary staff who have been vetted by police before they are employed in jobs where they work with children; and whether his Department keeps information as to the number of people refused employment and the reasons therefor.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on 29 April, at column 283.

University Grants

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the percentage increase in grants to the universities for each year since 1974.

Mr. Jackson: Changes in grants made available to universities in Great Britain on the advice of the University Grants Committee and the Computer Board have been:

Financial year	*Per cent. increase over previous year*
1974-75	10·0
1975-76	25·0
1976-77	13·4
1977-78	10·2
1978-79	11·2
1979-80	21·8
1980-81	26·7
1981-82	3·0
1982-83	19·4
1983-84	3·5
1984-85	2·5
1985-86	3·1
1986-87	3·6
1987-88	[1]9·6
1988-89	[1]7·8

[1] Estimates.

Universities also receive public funds from other sources, notably through the home undergraduate tuition fee, where changes in practice create difficulties for year-on-year comparisons.

Research Expenditure

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is in 1988 moneys the annual expenditure in civil research of the United Kingdom universities since 1974.

Mr. Jackson: The Department funds civil research in the universities through grants-in-aid to the research

councils and the University Grants Committee's block grant. Where the latter is concerned, only a notional attribution of resources committed to research can be made, since universities' research activities and other expenditure (including teaching) cannot be clearly distinguished. The figures in the following table are therefore necessarily approximate.

No figures are available for the notional attribution to research of UGC funding prior to 1977-78. Since 1977-78, approximate total expenditure, at constant 1988-89 prices as measured by the GDP deflator, on civil research at United Kingdom universities through the research councils and the UGC is as follows:

	£ million
1977-78	741
1978-79	763
1979-80	800
1980-81	840
1981-82	838
1982-83	860
1983-84	859
1984-85	845
1985-86	848
1986-87	863
1987-88	856
1988-89	867

Sources: Annual Reviews of Government Funded R and D 1983-87.
For 1986-87—Appropriation Accounts.
For 1987-88 and 1988-89—Supply Estimates.

Statistics on funding of research in universities by other Government Departments can be found in the annual reviews of Government funded R and D.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the percentage increase in teachers' pay for each year since 1974.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 27 April, at columns *168-69*.

Teacher Governors (Misconduct)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on how many occasions of which he is aware a school governing body or sub-committee of a school governing body has brought and heard charges of gross misconduct against a teacher employed at the school in respect of that teacher's actions as a governor of the school and not related to the teacher-governor's employment at the school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: We are not aware of any such occasions. The meetings and proceedings of school governing bodies are governed by regulations made by my right hon. Friend. Under the current regulations a teacher or other governor is disqualified from continuing to hold that office in certain specified circumstances. However, the regulations make no provision for a governing body to hold a disciplinary hearing in relation to the actions of one of its members in that person's capacity as a governor.

Higher Education (Course Approval)

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many of Her Majesty's inspectors will be rendered redundant by the ending of the course approval system for higher education.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many *(a)* colleges of further education, *(b)* colleges of higher education, *(c)* polytechnics and *(d)* universities in England and Wales are actively engaged in ethnic monitoring with respect to (i) academic staff, (ii) support staff and (iii) the student body;

(2) how many *(a)* colleges of further education, *(b)* colleges of higher education, *(c)* polytechnics and *(d)* universities in England and Wales are actively engaged in ethnic monitoring in accord with guidelines currently laid down by the Commission for Racial Equality with respect to (i) academic staff, (ii) support staff and (iii) the student body.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected by my Department. However, a consultative document was issued by the Department on 8 March addressing the issues and options for consideration in the collection of ethnically-based statistics for students in further and higher education. The document sought views on the use of the Commission for Racial Equality guidelines for classification of ethnic origin.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on overall percentages of black lecturers in *(a)* colleges of further education, *(b)* colleges of higher education, *(c)* polytechnics and *(d)* universities.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected by my Department.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if UCCA and PCAS plan to include an ethnic monitoring question on their application forms for student entry to universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 13 April 1988, at column *135*, in which it was reported that UCCA is considering the question of ethnic monitoring of university applicants. In addition, a response to the Department's consultative document on ethnic monitoring of students in further and higher education has now been received from PCAS indicating its willingness to discuss the proposal with the Department.

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when his Department will publish the progress report on the implementation of equal opportunities policies for women in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: The report is being published today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

Selection and Promotion

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if there have been any changes in the principles underlying selection for and promotion in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: No. Entry to and promotion in the Civil Service continue to be based on selection on merit.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Trafficking

95. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about progress the Government are making both bilaterally and multilaterally in controlling the international trade in drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We receive occasional representations about the need for international co-operation in the fight against drug trafficking. The Government have helped in achieving progress on a number of fronts: in the United Nations, by our support for its drugs agencies and for current work on a draft convention against trafficking; at regional level through our chairmanship of the Council of Europe's co-operation group on drugs (the Pompidou group); and by various forms of bilateral co-operation, including the provision of financial assistance for drug producing and transit countries and negotiations to conclude agreements with other countries for the enforcement of court orders to confiscate traffickers' assets.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of stay of prioners held on remand who are transferred from London courts to police stations in *(a)* the Doncaster area and *(b)* nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The infor.nation requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Passports

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *592*, whether he has any plans to allow persons applying for passports to have the option of either an old-style British passport or a new-style European Community format passport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Retention of the old form of passport after computerisation of the United Kingdom passport offices would lead to confusion, inefficiency and additional expense. The public would lose the advantages of a fully computerised passport-issuing service and of having a pssport which is machine-readable.

Police (Greater Manchester)

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the level of his Department's funding of the Greater Manchester police in real terms during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office meets, through police specific grant, 51% of police authorities' expenditure for police purposes. An additional contribution is made from central funds through block grant. We have no plans to review this level of funding.

Safer Cities Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet decided in which areas the initial safer cities programme will operate; what the total cost of this initial phase will be; how much of this represents new expenditure by his Department; and what vote the remaining expenditure will come from.

Mr. Hurd: We aim to establish 20 safer cities projects over the next three years: eight in 1988-89; eight in 1989-90; and four in 1990-91. Each will be located in an urban programme area where there are serious crime problems, and where other central Government programmes have been targeted. My hon. Friend the Minister of State announced on 7 April, when visiting the west midlands, that Wolverhampton is to be the first safer cities project area. Other areas will be invited to join the safer cities programme soon. Decisions about the location of projects will be made only after consultation with the appropriate local authority, the police and probation services and other local interests. Provision for the initial phase of the programme (1988-89) is £2·9 million. This will be met from the Home Office Vote (class XI, vote 3) and all of it represents new expenditure.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will construct a table showing the average number of doses of drugs administered per inmate in each of Her Majesty's penal establishments in the last available year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[pursuant to his reply, 20 January 1988, c. 706]:* I am grateful to the hon. Member for drawing attention to an inaccuracy in that part of the information in my earlier reply which related to Her Majesty's prison, Wakefield.

The pharmacist at Wakefield is responsible for dispensing not only at that establishment but at six other establishments and his returns, on which my reply was based, represent the doses of medicine administered at the seven establishments. The information relating solely to Her Majesty's prison Wakefield is as follows:

Number of doses of medicine administered to inmates in prison service establishments in England and Wales 1 April 1986-31 March 1987

	HMP Wakefield
1. Medicines available without prescription in the community	157,084
Prescription only medicines	
2. Psychotropic drugs (ie antidepressants, sedatives and tranquillisers)	49,925
3. Hypnotic Drugs	16,837
4. Drugs acting on the central nervous system other than those shown in (2) and (3)	13,825
5. Other drugs and medicines	347,713

TRANSPORT

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of child pedestrian road fatalities, in total and expressed in relative terms, in each member state of the European Community within the age ranges five to nine, 10 to 14 and 15 to 17, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of deaths in each member state of the European Community is as follows for 1979 to 1986 inclusive. Data for other years could be made available only at disproportionate cost. Most countries use the standard international definition of "road accident death", which is dying within 30 days as result of the road accident. The exceptions are France (death within six days of the accident), Greece (death within three days), Italy (death within seven days) and Spain (death within 24 hours).

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1979

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	145	94	65	14·4
Belgium	25	18	17	12·1
Denmark	11	10	5	18·2
Eire	20	9	9	16·7
France	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	182	93	86	11·4
Greece	28	28	15	18·2
Italy	80	56	51	10·5
Luxembourg	1	1	1	15·8
Netherlands	25	10	10	17·1
Spain	66	41	28	11·3
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1980

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	105	109	86	14·7
Belgium	26	12	13	10·1
Denmark	6	4	5	10·9
Eire	15	5	4	11·5
France	113	80	57	11·5
Germany	173	100	81	11·4
Greece	12	10	3	6·5
Italy	91	47	40	9·8
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	34	12	4	16·9
Spain	74	41	30	12·5
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1981

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	123	101	81	15·6
Belgium	26	15	12	12·5
Denmark	8	3	9	13·5
Eire	15	10	9	15·8
France	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	141	77	65	10·8
Greece	13	12	7	8·2
Italy	64	45	24	8·5
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	28	11	10	16·7
Spain	58	46	31	12·1
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1982

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	99	127	75	15·5
Belgium	17	22	11	13·0
Denmark	9	8	3	12·3
Eire	5	15	9	18·0
France	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	124	48	45	8·4
Greece	13	10	7	7·0
Italy	59	39	35	8·5
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	20	16	9	17·4
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain	48	35	19	10·0

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1983

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	132	132	86	17·6
Belgium	19	17	11	12·6
Denmark	9	6	9	15·9
Eire	13	9	12	19·3
France	96	72	46	11·4
Germany	90	59	55	8·2
Greece	14	15	8	8·5
Italy	66	42	25	9·3
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	19	20	6	15·7
Spain	51	34	18	9·5
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1984

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	115	141	69	16·8
Belgium	19	18	7	13·2
Denmark	4	10	8	17·2
Eire	16	8	6	19·2
France	89	81	34	11·6
Germany	79	37	43	7·0
Greece	16	3	4	5·3
Italy	41	29	22	7·2
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	12	7	6	11·8
Spain	41	30	31	10·0
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1985

	Age of fatality			*Percentage of all pedestrian deaths*
	6 to 9	*10 to 14*	*15 to 17*	
United Kingdom	109	129	69	16·6
Belgium	23	10	9	12·9

	Age of fatality			Percentage of all pedestrian deaths
	6 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	
Denmark	9	7	2	14·3
Eire	12	7	3	15·9
France	83	78	35	12·6
Germany	69	36	31	7·6
Greece	15	11	4	7·3
Italy	51	39	22	9·0
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	9	10	6	13·4
Spain	50	47	30	12·4
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pedestrian deaths in EC countries: 1986

	Age of fatality			Percentage of all pedestrian deaths
	6 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	
United Kingdom	80	108	79	13·8
Belgium	16	11	8	10·9
Denmark	3	6	3	9·0
Eire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	74	52	43	n/a
Germany	87	38	27	7·4
Greece	11	6	7	5·9
Italy	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	12	10	7	13·4
Spain	60	39	28	10·9
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatal accidents involving heavy lorries have occurred on the A1 in Northumberland in the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been 10 such accidents in the period from 1 January 1983 to date.

The figures are as follows:

	Number
1983	1
1984	2
1985	2
1986	2
1987	3
1988	[1] —

[1] None to date.

Dial-a-Ride (London)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received seeking an increase of funding for London Dial-a-Ride to enable it to provide one trip a week to each of its registered users; and what response he has made.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a number of letters from Members of Parliament, voluntary organisations and private individuals concerning the "one trip a week" campaign by the London Dial-a-Ride User's Association. In replying I have pointed out that funding has already been increased from £4·2 million in 1985-86 to £6·27 million in 1988-89 and this has provided for a substantial expansion of Dial-a-Ride services. London Regional Transport believes that there is still considerable scope for increasing service provision within existing resources by more cost-effective operation. We would expect that to be fully exploited before substantial increases in resources are sought.

Israel (Flights)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that security staff handling passengers on flights from United Kingdom airports to Israel do not question the political beliefs of passengers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not require passengers flying to Israel or anywhere else to be questioned about their political beliefs.

It is open to airlines to add further security measures if they consider them necessary to protect their operations.

Miracle Bus Company

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he was first advised of the problems facing the Southend council and the Miracle Bus Company in securing permission from the West German Government to provide a bus from Ostend to West Germany to connect with a plane from Southend airport; and if he will set out the actions taken by his Department since that time.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department first became aware of these problems in December 1985. Since then we have been engaged in correspondence and discussions with the authorities in Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Commission to secure authorisation for the operation of the service. I understand that it is now due to come into operation towards the end of this month.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Swaziland

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment is available to him of the level of economic growth in Swaziland in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: The rate of economic growth in Swaziland, as measured by the estimated growth in the gross domestic product, is as follows for each year since 1983.

Percentage Growth Rate of GDP in Current Prices

Year	Per cent.
1984	4·2
1985	2·4
1986	7·4
1987	0·0

Source: IMF Staff Papers and Swaziland Budget Speech 1988-89.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the extent to which Swaziland has benefited from joining the Lomé convention and giving improved access to European Community markets.

Mr. Chris Patten: Over the five years to 1990 Swaziland will get 26 million ecu (about £18 million) in planned aid from the European development fund, in addition to

benefiting from SADCC and other regional projects. Swaziland also receives lending from the European Investment Bank, finance under the STABEX scheme, and emergency aid.

Under the Lomé convention, Swaziland's industrial products and the great majority of her agricultural products can enter the Community free of tariff or other restrictions. Swaziland also benefits from the special provisions of the Lomé convention relating to sugar and beef. Under the sugar protocol, Swaziland may export annually up to 117,844·5 tonnes to the Community at a guaranteed price, which is currently about three times the world market price; and under an exchange of letters annexed to the convention Swaziland can export annually up to 3,363 tonnes of beef and veal to the Community.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current development projects in Swaziland for which United Kingdom national, Commonwealth or European Community assistance is given, and the value of that assistance.

Mr. Chris Patten: Under the bilateral aid programme to Swaziland, Britain is currently financing the following projects:

Product	*£ million*
Water scheme for rural areas	0·55
Land purchase and development	2·00

In addition, we expect to spend about £2 million in 1988-89 on technical co-operation activities.

The Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation is currently financing, with grants estimated at £269,000, a number of technical co-operation projects in Swaziland.

Projects in Swaziland currently being financed by the European Community under the second and third Lomé conventions are as follows:

	£ million
Grant funding	
Rural water supplies	1·69
Teacher Training College (Ngwane and Piggs Peak)	1·24
Smallholders support project (credit and marketing)	2·45
Integrated development of trade and tourism in handicrafts	1·86
Micro projects	0·56
Technical assistance (Rural Development Areas Programme; Swazi Development and Savings Bank; Co-operatives and Credit Union; Department of Economic Planning; Customs and Excise)	1·69
Development of Matsapha airport	1·45
Agricultural training (SADCC)	0·74
Training of customs officers	0·35
Regional training (SADCC)	0·28
Waterford Kambaa School	0·22
Regional railways training	0·16
Maths and Science teacher training	1·59
Swazi Industrial Development Corporation	0·84
Special loan funding	
Vocational training centre (Matsapha Manzini)	2·21
Swazi Investment and Development Corporation (SINDECO)	2·07
Total	19·40

The United Kingdom share of European Community aid listed above is £3·2 million.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list United Kingdom contributions to Swaziland through national, Commonwealth and European Community action in each year since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

£000s

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Gross United Kingdom bilateral aid[1]	5,665	5,626	3,376	7,722
Estimated United Kingdom share of Commonwealth[2] aid	69	72	94	80
Estimated United Kingdom share of European Community aid	700	1,070	360	380

Note: Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

[1] Includes expenditure by the Commonwealth Development Corporation of: (1983) 2,683, (1984) 2,876, (1985) 1,267 and (1986) 3,881.

[2] Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation; figures cover the period July-June.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what measures he has taken, or proposes to take, to assist the Swaziland Government to strengthen their national economy and decrease their dependence on the economy of the Republic of South Africa;

(2) if he will make a statement on her Majesty's Government's policy on the role of the Southern African Development Co-ordination conference as an agency for diminishing Swaziland's economic dependence on the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: One of the principal aims of our bilateral aid programme to Swaziland is to strengthen the national economy. In addition we support the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference, of which Swaziland is a member.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment is available to him of Swaziland's repayment of foreign debt; and to which countries payments are in arrears.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures show the debt service payment which were due and estimates of the actual payments made on public and publicly guaranteed debt from 1985 to 1987. I am not aware of any countries which have failed to receive repayments due from Swaziland.

Debt service payments $US million

Year	*Due*	*Paid*
1985	23	23
1986	23	25
1987	27	28

Source: World bank debt tables and IMF staff papers.

Middle East

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the level and nature of medical aid from Her Majesty's Government to the Palestinians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Last year we provided £650,000 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the

International Committee of the Red Cross for their programmes in Lebanon, which included medical assistance. In addition, we have recently committed some £104,000 through the Order of St. John and Oxfam for medical support in the occupied territories, including nursing, training, research, surgery and support for the mentally handicapped.

The European Community has allocated £270,000 in emergency aid, including medical supplies, to Palestinians since December 1987. Some 20 per cent. of the Community's programme is met from the British aid budget.

Ethiopia (Aid)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in view of the intransigence of the Ethiopian Government over famine relief operations in Tigré, Her Majesty's Government will consider increasing donations to the Relief Society of Tigré through the channel of British aid agencies.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are extremely concerned about the disruption of relief operations in Eritrea and Tigré as a result of the recent intensification of civil conflict and the Ethiopian Government's decision that most expatriate relief personnel must leave these regions. Our objective remains to provide humanitarian relief to the hungry, regardless of where they are.

NORTHERN IRELAND

South Down (Education)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the reorganisation and rationalisation of secondary school education in the controlled sector in the northern area of South Down; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. However, the South-Eastern education and library board is currently considering the matter.

SCOTLAND

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the reasons why kidney transplants have had to be discontinued at the Western infirmary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that the kidney transplantation programme at the Western infirmary is being carried out at broadly the same level as in previous years. The only constraint is the availability of donated organs.

National Health Service Property

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the National Health Service properties in Tayside which require work to be done as identified by the National Audit Office report of 28 March, HC 405; and if he will make a statement;

(2) which National Health Service properties in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Tayside do not comply with statutory and non-statutory building standards as outlined in the National Audit Office report of 28 March, HC 405;

(3) what is the estimated cost of work required to be carried out in Tayside health board properties as identified by the National Audit Office report of 28 March, HC 405.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The National Audit Office report on "Estate Management in the National Health Service" does not identify particular properties used by Tayside health board which require substantial maintenance work. The report stresses the importance of developing strategies to maintain the Health Service estate in an adequate condition. The comprehensive survey into the condition of all hospitals, carried out by health boards in Scotland during 1986-87, is in line with this recommendation.

In the survey, Tayside health board estimated that work costing £21·8 million was necessary, over the next 10 years, to maintain its buildings in an adequate condition. This estimate is now being scrutinised by the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Where health service premises are subject to statutory requirements, the various enforcement agencies ensure compliance. Beyond these statutory requirements, the Department has issued instructions to boards on a wide range of non-statutory standards.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present pupil-teacher ratio for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provisional pupil-teacher ratios for 1987-88 are 20·2 in primary and 12·9 in secondary schools.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students in Scottish further and higher education are between the ages of 16 and 18.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In session 1986-87 the number of students in vocational higher and further education in Scotland aged 16 to 18 inclusive was estimated to be 92,000. Of these, 34,100 were full-time or sandwich course students and 57,900 were part-time students.

Meat Firms (Redundancies)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about redundancies in Scottish meat firms caused by Messrs Marks and Spencer transferring its purchases to Brazilian firms; and if the recent agreements at the European Council will result in Scottish meat firms receiving supplies at prices comparable to Brazil.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Marks and Spencer's decision should not affect Scottish meat firms generally, but will have an adverse impact on employment at one particular company, with whom officials are in close touch. The Government have discussed this problem with the European Commission, which recently stated at a meeting of the Agriculture Council that it recognised the need to ensure that additional supplies of beef are

available to the Community's meat processing industry on terms that enable Community production to be competitive with products from other sources.

Infertility

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an official survey into infertility provision within the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have for some time recognised the importance of developments in the alleviation of infertility. However, we take the view that we cannot contemplate a review of infertility services in Scotland until such time as consideration has been completed of the recommendations of the Warnock report on "Human Fertilisation and Embryology".

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what current research is being undertaken into the needs of the infertile in Scotland;

(2) what Government funded research is being undertaken into infertility services in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department is not currently funding any research specifically on infertility services and the needs of the infertile. Some aspects of a current research project on well women clinics may, however, have a bearing on this, and previously funded research on male infertility has been incorporated within the service provided by one health board. So far as Government funded research into more fundamental aspects of infertility is concerned, the main focus of the Medical Research Council's work in this field is the reproductive biology unit based in Edinburgh.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds have been allocated in the past five years to health boards for the provision of National Health Services for the infertile in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No separate allocation of resources is made to health boards for the provision of infertility services. It is for each health board to decide within the available resources what priority should be given to the provision of such services.

Local Authority Employees (Audit Information)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take in the light of responses to his consultation paper in which he proposed to amend section 101(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to restrict the rights of the public to inspect at the time of audit information which an authority holds about its employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has decided in the light of the responses received to his consultation paper to seek at the next convenient opportunity an amendment to section 101(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 so that all information relating to employees of local authorities, audited under part VIII of the 1973 Act, should be excluded from public inspection, except information about gross pay, allowances, bonuses and overtime payments, which would continue to be open to inspect at time of audit. My right hon. and learned Friend considers that such an amendment would strike an acceptable balance between safeguarding personal privacy and providing adequate public inspection to ensure proper accountability. It also corresponds with similar action being taken by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales.

Competitive Tendering

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a timetable for the implementation of competitive tendering procedures for individual local government services in the phasing programme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has now considered the responses to the consultation paper on implementation of competition for Scottish local authority services issued in November. He has decided to confirm the proposal of a phased introduction of competition by local authorities with authorities split into groups and each group taking the activities covered by the Act in a different order. The groups of authorities will be the same as set out in the consultation paper. The date by which authorities will have had to have exposed their first activities to competition will be set at 1 August 1989, to allow adequate time for all stages of the competitive process to be completed.

Two other changes to the implementation proposals have been made which will help ensure efficient implementation of the competition process. These take account of the fact that a decision on the possibility of adding sport and leisure management to the list of defined activities has not yet been taken, and therefore, if this activity is added by order, some delay in implementing competition for it is inevitable.

My right hon. and learned Friend has decided to confirm the £100,000 de minimis level below which authorities' services would be exempt from competition. He has considered very carefully the position of the islands councils, but has concluded that no form of exemption is to be given to them at this stage. Their position will, however, be carefully monitored through a research project which will evaluate the effect of competition.

These decisions are described fully in letters which are today being sent to all affected authorities and other bodies covered by part I of the Act and copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Community Care

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will issue guidelines to social fund officers to accept applications for community care grants for domestic alarm installation, including telephone socket costs, to enable residents on benefit to continue to stay at home and out of long-stay residential institutions.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

No. When considering such applications social fund officers will exercise their discretion in the light of general guidance and the Secretary of State's directions in the "Social Fund Manual". Local authorities have powers to supply and meet the costs of alarms for elderly, sick or disabled people. Housing benefit (or, for owner-occupiers, income support) may be available in certain circumstances to help with the running costs.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Televising of Proceedings

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will arrange for a copy of the video recording shown to the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House produced by the Central Office of Information and showing a compendium of televised proceedings of overseas Parliaments to be *(a)* made available to right hon. and hon. Members and *(b)* shown in the Jubilee Room for Members of both Houses and the media.

Mr. Wakeham: I am placing a copy of the video recording in the Library, where it will be accessible to Members by arrangement with the staff of the Library.

Press Bar

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the annual turnover of the Press Bar of the House of Commons; who is permitted to use the bar; whether a loss or profit was made in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The Press Bar's turnover for the 12 months ended 31 March 1988, excluding VAT, was £38,790; the gross profit for the same period was £14,935. A profit was made during each of the last five years. Those permitted to use the Press Bar are: Parliamentary Lobby journalists and their guests, overseas press officers, Hansard staff, and staff posted to the Press Gallery.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the number of accredited journalists entitled to use the Press Bar of the House of Commons.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest Pass Office figures show that 393 accredited journalists are entitled to use the bar in the Parliamentary Press Gallery premises.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC (Foreign Policies)

16. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I met my colleagues from the Twelve to discuss European political co-operation matters at an informal weekend meeting in Konstanz on 5-6 March, and again at a ministerial meeting on 22 March in Brussels. I next expect to discuss these matters on 13 June in Luxembourg.

World Debt

18. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet other Foreign Ministers to discuss world debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told the hon. Member on 3 February, my right hon. and learned Friend and I regularly meet our counterparts from other countries. Debt is frequently discussed, particularly with the Foreign Ministers of debtor nations and of major creditor nations.

Malaysia

19. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei from 5 to 10 April. We enjoy close and developing relations with all three countries. In Malaysia he had valuable discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Minister for Education on bilateral links and a range of regional and international issues.

As part of our common stand on drugs issues, we agreed in principle to work for a reciprocal agreement on the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets.

Central America

20. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policies are currently being pursued by Her Majesty's Government to establish peace in central America.

Mr. Eggar: We and our European partners have repeatedly expressed our support for the Guatemala peace agreement and urged the Central American Governments to fulfil their commitments under that agreement. We have appealed to countries with links and interests in the region to lend constructive support for the peace efforts of the Central American countries. We have also condemned all acts of violence which might jeopardise the peace process. We have warmly welcomed the 60-day truce signed at Sapoa on 23 March as a positive step towards the achievement of peace and reconciliation and hope that it will facilitate the establishment of a pluralistic democracy in Nicaragua.

43. **Mr. Michael Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a settlement in Central America of the conduct of the recent elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: The holding of elections in El Salvador was in keeping with the objectives of the Central American peace agreement, which we support, of establishing peace and democracy in the region.

53. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the Central American peace plan; and what initiatives the Government are taking to encourage further developments.

70. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the Central American peace plan; and what initiatives the Government are taking to encourage further developments.

Mr. Eggar: We and our European partners have repeatedly expressed our support for the Guatemala peace agreement and urged the Central American Governments to fulfil their commitments under that agreement. We have appealed to countries with links and interests in the region to lend constructive support for the Central American peace process. We have also condemned all acts of violence which might jeopardise the peace process. We welcomed

the 60-day truce signed at Sapoa on 23 March as a positive step towards peace and reconciliation within a pluralistic democracy in Nicaragua.

63. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Central America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Central America.

Chemical Weapons

21. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the limitation of chemical weapons.

Mr. Mellor: We are committed to the negotiation of an effectively verifiable and global ban on chemical weapons. Encouraging progress has been made at the negotiations in Geneva to this end. However, many complex details remain to be resolved, particularly on verification and arrangements for an international inspectorate, if we are to achieve an effective convention.

Middle East

22. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to discuss recent events in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. The Palestine Liberation Organisation is well aware why contact at this level remains difficult.

50. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on his policy towards the response of the Israeli Government to the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.

67. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the Israeli Government about the deaths and injuries inflicted by Israeli troops on Palestinians in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

76. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any recent representations to the Government of Israel about the security situation in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

87. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the situation in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We regularly urge Israel to administer the occupied territories in accordance with international law and human rights standards. We particularly deplore the use of live ammunition, deportations and collective punishments, and other excessive measures of repression.

South Africa

23. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the Government of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain regular contact with the South African authorities, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador, on a wide range of issues.

48. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria influence his decision to talk to, and acknowledge, some black South African leaders and not others.

90. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria influence his decision to talk to and acknowledge some leaders in South Africa and not others.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy is to maintain contact with a wide cross-section of black South African opinion.

56. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further response he has received from the South African Government to his representations on behalf of the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: A defence application for a retrial is currently under consideration. We continue to follow the progress of the case closely and with concern.

Poland (Human Rights)

24. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding human rights in Poland.

Mr. Mellor: My colleagues and I have received many representations on this subject. The concern expressed in all parts of the House about human rights in Poland is fully reflected in representations we made to the Polish authorities, sometimes with our Community partners. During the visit of the Polish Foreign Minister last December, for instance, my right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that we hoped all forms of harassment of Solidarity supporters would cease.

Palestinians (Assassinations)

25. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made representations to the Government of Israel about the recent assassinations of Palestinians in Tunis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No.

35. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about their recent act of state terrorism in Tunis.

40. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel about the killing of Palestinians in Tunisia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Gulf War (Chemical Weapons)

26. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions his Department intends to take in response to the recent use of chemical weapons in the Gulf war.

Mr. Mellor: We abhor the use of chemical weapons by any country in contravention of the 1925 Geneva protocol. As far as the Iran/Iraq conflict is concerned, we have made our views abundantly clear to those concerned when chemical weapons have been used. We and our European Community colleagues issued a condemnatory statement on 24 March. More recently, on 29 March the Iraqi ambassador in London was told of the British Government's own condemnation of Iraqi use in Kurdistan in mid-March.

The Secretary General's investigative team has confirmed that chemical weapons were used then. We shall be studying the report very closely but are deeply concerned that the investigation has shown that these weapons continue to be used in the conflict.

We have been willing to allow CW victims to receive specialist private hospital treatment in this country for humanitarian reasons. This in no way prejudices our impartiality in the conflict itself. Eleven victims, six from Iran and five from Iraq, are receiving treatment following use of chemical weapons in Kurdistan.

Terrorism

27. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards achieving an international convention on terrorism.

Mr. Mellor: There already exist a number of international conventions dealing with various aspects of terrorist crime, including the Tokyo convention on offences and certain other acts committed on board aircraft, the Hague convention for the suppression of unlawful seizure of aircraft, the Montreal convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation and the New York international convention against the taking of hostages. Opportunities to supplement these conventions are taken in the light of developments in the continuing fight against terrorism. For example, a protocol to the Montreal convention, which extends the provisions of the convention to cover acts of violence at international airports as well as on board aircraft, was open for signature on 24 February 1988. I regret to say that by no means all countries have signed the conventions. We continue to press those which have not to do so.

Anglo-Turkish Relations

28. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Turkish relations.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain's relations with Turkey are excellent. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister paid a very successful visit to Turkey last month and President Evren will be making a state visit to Britain this summer. Trade is increasing and record numbers of Britons will visit Turkey this year.

Guatemala

29. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current human rights situation in Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: A number of murders and kidnappings have occurred, although it is not clear to what extent they are criminally rather than politically motivated. We accept the view of the United Nations special expert on Guatemala that it is the Government's firm political will to ensure respect for human rights and that violations are not a result of Government policy.

75. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions were sent to the British embassy in Guatemala in connection with the return of the Guatemala exiles on Monday 18 April.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassador was requested to monitor the situation carefully and to keep the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed of developments.

Namibia

30. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position in relation to South Africa's unlawful occupation of Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We believe that the South Africans should end their unlawful occupation of Namibia. We remain committed to Namibian independence on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolution 435 and without preconditions. We support efforts by the United Nations Secretary General and the United States Administration to secure the implementation of resolution 435.

41. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take to speed the implementation of United Nations resolution 435, calling for a South African withdrawal from Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to press South Africa to agree to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435.

Bophuthatswana

31. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of efforts by the Bophuthatswana Government to establish a multi-racial, democratic society which guarantees human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: The policy of apartheid applied in other parts of South Africa is not applied within Bophuthatswana. However, Bophuthatswana was created out of the republic of South Africa as a key element in the policy of separate development and we regard the territory as part of South Africa.

Moreover, there are persistent reports that non-Tswanas resident in Bophuthatswana are subject to discrimination. We also note that recent legislation restricts the exercise of certain individual rights.

36. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment

he has made of the extent to which he is receiving accurate and detailed information about the situation in Bophuthatswana from the British embassy in Pretoria.

46. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that the British embassy in South Africa obtains more accurate information about the situation in Bophuthatswana.

64. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that the British embassy in Pretoria obtains more accurate information about the situation in Bophuthatswana.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's embassy in South Africa already provides full and accurate information on all relevant aspects of the South African scene, including developments in Bophuthatswana.

73. **Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on efforts to establish within Bophuthatswana a multi-racial, democratic society which guarantees human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: Any assessment has to take into account that Bophuthatswana is an expression of the South African Government's policy of grand apartheid and that we do not recognise it or the other "independent" homelands.

The policy of apartheid applied in other parts of South Africa is not applied within Bophuthatswana but there are persistent reports that non-Tswanas resident in Bophuthatswana are subject to discrimination. We note that recent legislation restricts the exercise of certain individual rights.

Falkland Islands

32. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet members of the Falkland Islands Council.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet members of the Falkland Islands Council.

Foreign Affairs Council

33. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the most recent meetings of the EC Foreign Affairs Council.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 27 April, at column 156.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

34. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament following the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Brussels summit.

Mr. Mellor: Four representations have been received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament since the NATO summit. These have covered the following subjects:

The NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting, 27-28 April;
The use of chemical weapons in the Gulf conflict (two representations);
The third United Nations special session on disarmament.

Israel

37. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in the light of the current situation on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, if he will give consideration to applying selective economic sanctions against Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Economic sanctions would not help bring about a solution of the problems of the region.

80. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the recent Israeli terrorist activity in Tunisia has affected Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a settlement in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We remain determined to work for a peaceful settlement of the Arab/Israeli conflict. Violence and terrorism offer no solution to the problems of the middle east.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Israel.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have always wanted to see Israel safe and secure. But Israel's own recent actions have made it more difficult for her friends to help her to achieve those objectives. We shall go on trying, not least by promoting the peace process. We hope that Israel will reciprocate those efforts. In particular, we urge Israel to make clear that she accepts that the only way for her to achieve lasting security is to endorse the principle of territory for peace.

Southern Africa Front-line States

38. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when last he met the ambassadors of the Southern Africa front-line states.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the high commissioners/ambassadors of the front-line states collectively. However, I met the high commissioners of Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and the Angolan charge and Nigerian counsellor on 16 March at their request to discuss the front-line states position on sanctions against South Africa.

Dalai Lama

39. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Dalai Lama; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has never met the Dalai Lama.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (Guatemala)

42. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the leader of the recent Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation to Guatemala to discuss the outcome of the meeting between the British and Argentinian delegations at this conference.

Mr. Eggar: The delegation called on me yesterday, 3 May, to discuss various aspects of the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference, including the meeting with the Argentine delegation.

Anglo-Algerian Relations

44. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Algerian relations.

Mr. Mellor: Relations between Britain and Algeria are becoming closer. I visited Algeria last September and the first meeting of the United Kingdom/Algerian joint commission took place in February. Both sides are agreed on the need to maintain this trend. The Algerian Foreign Minister has accepted an invitation to visit the United Kingdom, on dates yet to be fixed.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

45. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Sectetary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to attend the conference in Vienna on security and co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Mellor: I visited the Vienna CSCE meeting on 15 April. A copy of my speech has been placed in the Library. We will consider further ministerial visits to the meeting, including for the purpose of signing a concluding document, in the light of circumstances at the time.

Anglo-Soviet Relations

47. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's recent initiative to improve relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Mellor: Anglo-Soviet relations are better than for many years, with an active high level dialogue. Fundamental differences between us remain but we are able to discuss these frankly and look for solutions wherever possible. We aim to secure progress in arms control and the settlement of regional conflicts; much greater respect for human rights; an increase in trade; and more contacts between peoples at all levels. We shall continue to work for further improvement in bilateral relations.

59. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about Her Majesty's Government's current relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Mellor: We regularly receive letters from right hon. and hon. Members and members of the public about Anglo-Soviet relations. The views we receive are reflected, where appropriate, in our dealings with the Soviet authorities, where we are seeking to improve relations further, including progress in Soviet respect for human rights, arms control measures and the settlement of regional conflicts.

Chief Minister of Gibraltar

49. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of his recent talks with the Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I had a useful initial exchange of views with the new Chief Minister of Gibraltar on 12 April. We discussed a wide range of subjects of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister (China)

51. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Minister of China; and what was discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend had talks with the then Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian on 10 and 11 March during his visit to the United Kingdom. Their agenda covered a wide range of bilateral and international subjects, including East-West relations, disarmament, the middle east and Hong Kong. He has yet to meet the new Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen.

Anglo-Mexican Relations

52. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about current Anglo-Mexican relations.

Mr. Eggar: We enjoy excellent bilateral relations with Mexico. This is reflected in recent ministerial exchanges, which will continue with my visit to Mexico City from 1 to 3 June.

El Salvador

54. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a settlement in Central America of the conduct of recent elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: The holding of elections in El Salvador was in keeping with the objectives of the Central American peace agreement, which we support, of establishing peace and democracy in the region.

Republic of Ireland (Counter-terrorist Policy)

55. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland about the implications for counter-terrorist policy of that country's trading links with Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Irish Government are fully alive to the threat posed to both our countries by Libya's active support for terrorism. We have discussed this with them on a number of occasions recently, particularly in the context of increased security co-operation following the seizure of MV Eksund last October which revealed extensive Libyan support for the Provisional IRA.

EC Structural Funds

57. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of European Community structural funds is due to be spent in Britain for the current year.

Mrs. Chalker: The detailed arrangements for structural fund spending for the current year are still under discussion. We cannot therefore say what proportion is likely to be spent in the United Kingdom.

Poland

58. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Polish Government.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend had several hours of useful discussion with the Polish Foreign Minister, Professor Orzechowski, during his visit to London from 6 to 10 December.

Denmark

60. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Danish ambassador, and what subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has frequent occasion to meet the Danish ambassador informally, but has not received a call from him on official business for some time.

Guatemala and Belize

61. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on further progress in the territorial dispute between Guatemala and Belize; and what action the Government are taking to assist such progress.

Mr. Eggar: The territorial dispute is a matter for bilateral settlement between Belize and Guatemala. We wish to see the dispute resolved at an early date and are ready to assist the parties directly involved by being present at negotiations if both sides so wish.

Kampuchea

62. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will make it their policy to vote later in 1988 for the recognition by the United Nations of the Coalition Government of Kampuchea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have consistently voted in favour of United Nations resolutions which have reaffirmed the need to adhere to the principles of the United Nations; and which call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia and the right of the Cambodian people to self-determination, free from outside interference. There has been no vote on the question of Cambodian representation at the United Nations since 1982.

94. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards recognition of the coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, with particular regard to the right to sit at the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: Our policy is to recognise states, not governments. We have no dealings with either of the two rival Cambodian regimes as Governments. We support the retention by the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea of the Cambodian seat at the United Nations in line with the recommendations of the Credentials Committee.

Single European Market

65. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the opportunities provided for business and trades unions by the single European market.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are in regular contact with a number of business organisations and representative bodies about the completion of the single European market and the opportunities it affords for British businesses and for job opportunities.

74. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Lord Cockfield to discuss the completion of the internal European market.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met Lord Cockfield to talk about the single market on 18 November last year. He will be meeting him again shortly to discuss a number of issues including completion of the single market.

EC Foreign Ministers

66. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to discuss political co-operation with EEC Foreign Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met colleagues from the twelve to discuss European political co-operation matters at an informal weekend meeting in Konstanz on 5-6 March, and again at a ministerial meeting on 22 March in Brussels. He expects to discuss these matters with them next on 13 June in Luxembourg.

Atlantic Alliance

68. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made within the Western European Union to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

Mr. Mellor: Work is continuing on developing the Western European Union platform, on examining European security issues and on concerting policy on issues outside the NATO area affecting common security interests.

Persian Gulf

69. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position in the Persian Gulf.

71. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: The situation in the Gulf is relatively quiet at the moment. Since 18 April there has been only one attack on merchant shipping. Events on 18 April reminded Iran that she cannot expect to endanger the lives and interests of non-belligerents with impunity. The Armilla patrol, British minesweepers and other friendly navies in the area continue to contribute to maintaining freedom of navigation with a high level of vigilance.

Cyprus

72. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Cypriot relations.

Mrs. Chalker: Anglo-Cypriot relations are good. My right Friend the Prime Minister held friendly and useful talks with President Vassiliou on 31 March.

79. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for settlement of the Cyprus dispute.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to hope that the United Nations Secretary-General will be able to find a basis for the resumption of inter-communal talks. Good will gestures by both sides would facilitate his task.

Ethiopia

77. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Ethiopian Government about human rights issues in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: Over the years we have made numerous representations. Most recently my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development took the matter up with the Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister during a visit to Ethiopia in January. We shall continue to raise the subject at every suitable opportunity.

Afghanistan

78. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to pay an official visit to Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Panama

81. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there have been any discussions with the United States Government concerning the current situation in Panama.

85. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there have been any discussions with the United States Government concerning the current situation in Panama.

Mr. Eggar: The situation has been discussed in the course of our normal contacts with the United States Government.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there have been any discussions with the United States Government concerning the current situation in Panama.

Mr. Eggar: The situation in Panama has been discussed in the course of our normal contacts with the United States Government.

Commonwealth Countries (Nuclear Policy)

82. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Commonwealth states have policies of refusing access to nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered aircraft or naval vessels.

Mr. Mellor: New Zealand is the only Commonwealth country whose current policy in relation to declarations on the presence of nuclear weapons prevents visits by Royal Navy ships.

Hong Kong

83. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about progress with the transition to Chinese sovereignty in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations on the general question of the transition in Hong Kong. Good progress is being made in the implementation of the Sino-British joint declaration. The Sino-British joint liaison group and the Land Commission have held successful meetings, and have concluded agreements on a number of important issues which will facilitate a smooth transfer of Government in 1997.

USSR

84. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet his Soviet counterpart to discuss nuclear matters.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has had a series of meetings with Mr. Shevardnadze, most recently at Brize Norton in December and during his visit to Moscow in February, when they covered the full range of nuclear and arms control issues. No date has yet been fixed for their next meeting.

Nicaragua

86. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a settlement of the conflict in Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: We have consistently advocated a peaceful negotiated solution to the region's problems. Together with our European partners we warmly welcomed both the Guatemala peace agreement and the 60-day cease-fire agreement signed by the Government of Nicaragua and the Contras at Sapoa on 23 March. We hope negotiations for a definitive cease-fire now under way will lead to peace and reconciliation within a pluralistic democracy in Nicaragua.

Federal Republic of Germany

88. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has frequent occasion to meet the ambassador informally, but no immediate plans to meet him on official business.

Chile

89. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the imprisonment of the former Chilean Foreign Secretary, Clodomiro Almeyda.

Mr. Eggar: On 19 April, Sr. Clodomiro Almeyda's brother met officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He asked that Her Majesty's Government should intervene on his brother's behalf. He was informed that the Chilean Government are already well aware of our concern about Sr. Almeyda.

West Indies

91. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to pay an official visit to the West Indies.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to pay an official visit to the West Indies.

Human Rights

92. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Vienna Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe conference has so far yielded any advances in the area of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Advances have been distinctly modest so far. When I addressed the Vienna CSCE meeting on 15 April, I made it clear that we could not conclude business without much more progress on human rights issues.

Nigeria

93. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom-Nigeria relations.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told my hon. Friend on 3 February, the United Kingdom enjoys close and cordial relations with Nigeria. These were again demonstrated at the bilateral talks which my right hon. and learned Friend and I had with the Nigerian Foreign Minister at Chevening on 15 and 16 March.

Singapore

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Singaporean relations.

Mr. Eggar: Our relations with Singapore are excellent. My right hon. and learned Friend visited Singapore from 7 to 9 April as part of a wider tour of south-east Asia, which also included visits to Malaysia and Brunei. He had valuable discussions with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Deputy Prime Ministers Goh Chok Tong and Ong Teng Cheong, and with Foreign Minister Dhanabalan on bilateral links and a range of regional and international issues.

Gibraltar (Checkpoints)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to assess whether the border checkpoints on Gibraltar are working effectively and that staff are able and have powers to detain persons where this is considered necessary.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied with the effectiveness of the frontier controls. We are currently looking for ways of streamlining them.

Gibraltar (Police)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to assess the adequacy of the police establishment on Gibraltar; and what is the current approved establishment and actual staff in post.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied with the police establishment in Gibraltar, which is kept under continuous review. The approved establishment is 232 and there are currently 230 staff in post.

Miracle Bus Company

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he was first notified of the problems facing the Southend council and the Miracle Bus Company in securing permission from the West German Government to provide a bus from Ostend to Germany to connect with a plane from Southend airport; and if he will set out the action taken by his Department since that time.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department was first informed of the problems involved in setting up this service to Frankfurt in June 1986. Since then we have held many discussions with the German and Belgium authorities and with the European commission. Agreement was subsequently reached that the service should be authorised and I understand the British operator hopes to start the service at the end of this month.

Irish Trust (Residual Funds)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the transfer of residual funds from the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust has been completed; to what extent this has benefited, or will benefit, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in the island of Ireland; and if he will convey to Mr. Charles Haughey the appreciation of Her Majesty's Government of his interest in the matter.

Mrs. Chalker: The first (and major) tranche of surplus funds from the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust, £4·5 million, has been distributed in accordance with the 1987 Act. The distribution of the Irish Government's share is a matter for that Government, but I understand that they plan to pass a portion of the money to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (Ireland). I am happy to record the appreciation of Her Majesty's Government at this development.

DEFENCE

Ex-departmental Staff (Appointments)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff have left his Department and

taken up employment in the private defence industry, for each year from 1979 to date; and what were the grades involved.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total number of approvals by grade to take up employment in defence industries since 1979 is as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*
Below HEO	5	13	4	24	34	101	159	124	50	11
HEO	23	20	31	71	104	115	97	110	92	12
SEO	33	22	41	65	121	112	173	82	72	22
Grade 7	16	24	44	31	69	66	136	60	72	14
Grade 6	1	6	3	7	19	14	31	29	12	7
Grade 5	7	10	13	14	30	15	35	16	20	6
Grades 1-4	6	10	23	21	34	21	46	18	16	2
Total	91	105	159	233	411	444	677	439	334	74

[1]To date.

Notes:

1. The table represents the number of individuals making applications rather than the number of applications received.
2. The table includes all MOD civil servants and service officers at equivalent grades/ranks.
3. The figures record the number of approvals given to prospective appointments; records do not exist of those appointments actually accepted.

Prisoners of War, Wormhoudt

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in assessing the papers relating to the killing of 80 British prisoners of war captured in 1940 near the French village of Wormhoudt, near Dunkirk; what discussions he has had with others on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced on 21 April, we are examining the records relevant to the killing of the British prisoners of war in 1940 near Wormhoudt as a matter of urgency. We are in close touch with other interested Departments.

Chipmunk

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many hours of Royal Air Force initial training are currently carried out on the de Havilland Chipmunk aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Four thousand two hundred and fifty hours were flown on the de Havilland Chipmunk aircraft during elementary flying training in the year ending 31 March 1988.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many de Havilland Chipmunk aircraft are currently in Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Freeman: There are 77 Chipmunk aircraft currently in service with the RAF.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the de Havilland Chipmunk entered Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Freeman: The Chipmunk entered service with the RAF in February 1950.

Targeting Pods

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to order night vision targeting pods for Royal Air Force Tornado and Harrier GR5 aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following a competition, a contract for development and production of a night vision forward-looking infra-red system for Tornado GR1 and Harrier GR5 aircraft was awarded to GEC Sensors of Basildon in December 1985.

The competiton to select an advanced laser designator pod, a targeting aid for installation on Tornado GR1 aircraft, is in its final stages. There is no requirement for this system to be fitted on Harrier GR5 aircraft.

Nimrod

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is considering the conversion of Nimrod AEW aircraft for use as tankers.

Mr. Sainsbury: This is one of a number of possibilities we are considering for utilising the Nimrod AEW airframes, but no decision has yet been taken.

Trident

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total expenditure to date on the building of a road network for the establishment of a Trident base on the Clyde.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 4 March 1988 at column *687*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met his counterparts from the other European Community countries; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 20 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), at columns 505-6.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has

received concerning the restrictions placed on the movement of sheep following the Chernobyl disaster and concerning compensation to those farmers affected by the restrictions.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received representations from the Cumbria branch of the National Farmers Union, which sent to the Ministry's Carlisle office the results of a survey it conducted concerning the operation of the sheep compensation scheme. The branch has listed 66 producers who feel that they have been inadequately compensated. Of the 66 producers, 57 have already received compensation under the arrangements totalling £78,447 up to April 1988. We have said all along that we would be prepared to look at the scheme and its operation, which has been discussed in detail with the farmers' unions before and following the introduction of the various elements. As a result, changes have been made to some aspects of the scheme.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has evidence of an increase in mutations of lambs born in the restricted area of Cumbria since the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Congenital defects in lambs may be caused by a variety of factors, including environmental agents, nutritional deficiencies and viral infections. We are advised that the annual dose of radiation to sheep in Cumbria is within the normal range of background radiation in the United Kingdom. There is no reason to believe that the levels of contamination from Chernobyl present a health hazard to sheep or that it will effect their fertility or breeding potential. There is no evidence that lambs born in the restricted area of Cumbria have a higher incidence of congenital defects than lambs born elsewhere.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being undertaken into the mutation of lambs born in the restricted area of Cumbria since the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I understand that a research project by Liverpool university into the effects of low-level radiation on sheep is being undertaken. I believe that the project is utilising sheep supplied by farmers in North Wales, but I am not aware that sheep have been supplied by farmers in the restricted area of Cumbria.

Surplus Food and Drink

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total volume and value in pound sterling of surplus food and drink in the EEC.

Mr. MacGregor: A note setting out the volume of EC intervention stocks of agricultural commodities, which is not necessarily the same as surplus food and drink, is deposited in the Library of the House and updated monthly. The estimated book value of the EC stocks, excluding depreciation, set out in the most recently deposited note is £4·8 billion.

Sheep

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet the farming unions to discuss the sheep sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I continue to maintain regular contacts with the farming unions and their representatives on matters relating to the sheep sector.

Inshore Fishermen

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of licences that can be issued to an inshore fisherman; and if he will list them.

Mr. Gummer: The restrictive licensing scheme does not differentiate between inshore and offshore fishermen. The number of licences issued to a fisherman depends on his eligibility and the fish stocks he wishes to catch.

Farm Incomes

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing at the latest available date *(a)* what proportion of farms derived all their income from agriculture; *(b)* what proportion of those farmers' earnings were from non-agricultural employment, investment and pensions in (i) England, (ii) the south-western region and (iii) each of the counties in that region.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest information available is from the Inland Revenue's "Survey of Personal Incomes, 1984/85", and is given in table 4.5 of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom" 1988 edition. This shows that for those with a self-employment income from agriculture and horticulture in the United Kingdom:

(a) 15 per cent. had no other income than that arising from self-employment (virtually all from agriculture and horticulture) and,

(b) 30 per cent. had income from employment (in or out of agriculture) in addition to income from self-employment.

The further information requested is not available.

Milk

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on producer prices for milk at the latest available date in *(a)* Japan, *(b)* the European Community, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* New Zealand.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is set out in the table.

Producer price[1] per kilogramme of milk: 1987

Country	*Price per kilo*	
Japan[2]	Yen	[7]82·75
	Yen	[8]90·50
United States[3]	US$	0·272
New Zealand[4]	NZ$	[6]0·159
European Community Member States[5]		
United Kingdom	£	0·155
Germany	DM	0·612
France	FF	[9]1·757
Italy	Lire	519·9
Netherlands	Fl	0·718

Country	Price per kilo	
Belgium	BF	[6]11·10
Luxembourg	LF	12·21
Ireland	£IR	[6]0·174
Denmark	DKr	2·45
Greece	Dra	[6]37·19

Notes:
[1] Relates to milk of varying fat content.
[2] Guaranteed price for manufacturing milk delivered to factory: average selling price for fluid milk.
[3] Average price for milk sold to plants.
[4] Farmgate price of milk fat converted to milk equivalent; actual fat content.
[5] Ex farm, actual fat content: net of co-responsibility levy. No data are readily available for Spain and Portugal.
[6] Provisional.
[7] Manufacturing.
[8] Fluid.

Beef

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of beef exported in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; which countries the exports were sent to; and what was the price of buying the meat into intervention and of subsidising its export, respectively.

Mr. Donald Thompson: 176,140 tonnes of beef were exported from the United Kingdom in 1987. The table gives details of destinations. In 1987, 20,406 tonnes of intervention beef were sold under sales which required the beef to be exported to third countries. This beef had been purchased during a period the prices paid for intervention ranged from £1,920/tonne to £2,140/tonne for steer carcases of R3 quality on the carcase classification scale. The total expenditure on refunds for all beef exports to third countries in 1987 (including sales from intervention and other exports as well) was £27,401,295.

	Tonnes
EC member states	
France	79,716
West Germany	15,766
Irish Republic	9,975
Netherlands	9,270
Belgium/Luxembourg	7,056
Italy	3,127
Greece	641
Spain	592
Denmark	318
Portugal	166
Third countries:	
Brazil	14,611
Iraq	9,619
Egypt	3,918
Tunisia	3,444
South Africa	3,064
Iran	2,145
Turkey	1,814
Saudi Arabia	1,534
Barbados	1,267
Venezula	1,219
Cyprus	887
Zimbabwe	829
Mauritius	725
Israel	662
French Polynesia	346
Ivory Coast	232
Yugoslavia	214
Hong Kong	196
Sweden	194
Zaire	157
Dubai	150
Taiwan	143
Togo	125
Canary Island	113
Comoros	109
Malta	102
Angola	98
Romania	89
Antigua; Barbuda	87
Kuwait	87
Bahrain	79
India	75
Oman	75
Trinidad and Tobago	73
Gibralta	69
Jordan	62
Sharjah	59
Qatar	57
Bangladesh	50
Hungary	47
Niger	43
Bahamas	42
Sudan	41
Congo	38
Abu Dhabi	37
Senegal	36
Belize	34
Nigeria	30
Grenada	27
St. Lucia	27
Ghana	23
Gambia	22
Gabon	20
British Indian Occupied Territory	18
Czechoslovakia	18
Surinam	18
South Korea	17
Nauru	16
St. Vincent	15
Bolivia	14
Chad	13
Algeria	12
Andorra	12
Dominica	11
St. Helena	10
Djibouti	9
Japan	8
Libya	8
Tanzania	8
Bulgaria	7
Benin	6
Guatemala	6
North Yemen	6
Mayotte	5
Switzerland	5
Syria	5
Falkland Islands	4
Norway	4
Pakistan	4
Greenland	3
St. Kitts, Nevis Federation	2
Soviet Union	2
Zambia	2
Bermuda	1
Canada	1
Kenya	1
United States of America	1
Total trade with EC:	126, 627
Total trade with 3rd countries:	49,513
Total trade:	176,140

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent by the EEC in purchasing meat into public and private intervention over

the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and how much was spent on storing and exporting such beef, respectively, during the same period.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Intervention purchases are paid for initially by the member state, but part of the storage and financing costs, as well as the eventual loss on sale, are borne by the European Community. Private storage aid is paid in full by the EC. No separate figures are kept for the cost of export refunds on beef which has been the subject of public intervention storage and aided private storage. 1986 figures are as follows:

	million ecus	*£ million*
Total intervention	2,030·5	1,315·5
Private storage	102·3	66·3
Public intervention	1,928·2	1,249·2

Figures are available only for 10 months of 1987, as follows:

	million ecus	*£ million*
Total intervention	1,050·3	756
Private storage	66·3	48
Public intervention	984·0	708

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current range of prices offered for the purchase of beef into intervention; and what are the comparable figures offered to traders for such beef to be exported, including any specific export subsidy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Prices for beef being bought into intervention in Great Britain range from £1,646·7/tonne to £1,717·8/tonne for straight cut forequarters depending on the quality.

Prices for sales for export from intervention stocks are currently:

	Tonne
Cuts	£710·55—£3,908
Forequarters	£426·33—£994·76
Hindquarters	£1,456·22—£1,598·73

In certain cases prices within these ranges are minimum prices for tender sales and actual prices paid may be higher.

Export refunds are payable only in respect of some sales from intervention stocks, these being generally the sales for which higher prices are sought. The rate varies according to the eventual destination of the beef but the range of rates for frozen beef (adjusted by MCAs) in the week ending 29 April are:

	tonne
Cuts	£185·50—£727·80
Forequarters	£185·50—£483·60
Hindquarters	£315·60—£794·00

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the amount of beef produced and consumed internally by the EEC; and if comparable figures are available for lamb and pork respectively.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figures provided by the European Commission estimate the amount of beef produced and consumed in the EC in 1987 at 8,005,000 tonnes and 7,550,000 tonnes respectively. The equivalent estimates for mutton and lamb are 1,005,000 tonnes produced and 1,239,000 tonnes consumed, and for pigmeat 12,273,000 tonnes and 12,057,000 tonnes respectively.

EC Meat Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any record is kept of the meat which is exported from the EEC with subsidy and then returns to the United Kingdom for domestic consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Export refunds are available for beef, pigmeat and poultry and are paid only when proof is provided that the meat has been cleared through Customs for consumption in the country of destination.

Refunds are not generally payable for destinations which are significant exporters of beef to the Community. In 1986 when Brazil was suffering a meat shortage the Commission arranged tender sales of intervention beef to Brazil. A condition of these sales was that the beef should be imported by a Government agency, Interbras, and the Brazilian authorities gave an undertaking that the beef would be consumed there.

To ensure that exports of poultrymeat are not returned to the Community export refunds are related to the basic levies charged on all third country imports. The Community is not a significant importer of pigmeat.

Meat Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the recent European Council agreement on agricultural spending will have the effect of making meat available to home manufacturers and canners at prices comparable to the prices offered to foreign canners.

Mr. Donald Thompson: When the Council of Agriculture Ministers agreed on the level of imports of beef under the manufacturing balance sheet at its meeting on 8 February the Commission gave an undertaking that it recognised the need to ensure that additional supplies of beef are available to the Community meat processing industry on terms that enable Community production to be competitive with products from other sources. The recent decisions taken on agricultural spending should not affect the ability of the Commission to discharge this undertaking.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many badgers were removed in each of the parishes listed under his badger control strategy in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 April 1988]*: The numbers of badgers taken in parishes where, under the present control strategy, badgers may be removed automatically in the event of an unexplained herd breakdown due to bovine tuberculosis, are shown in the following table. The table excludes badgers taken in removal operations prior to adoption in April 1986 of the revised control strategy recommended in the Dunnet Report.

County	Parish	Number of badgers taken 1986	1987
Avon	Batheaston	13	—
	Cold Ashton	37	6
	English Combe	4	—
	Hawkesbury	3	28
	St. Catherine	1	—
Cornwall	Camborne	—	9
	Helland	4	—
	Kirkhampton	—	18
	Linkinhorne	—	5
	Ludgvan	—	13
	Michaelstow	4	—
	Merwenstowe	—	1
	Sancreed	13	—
	South Hill	2	4
	Stithians	19	—
	Stoke Climsland	—	6
	St. Gulvias	43	—
	St. Just	46	—
	St. Neot	23	—
	St. Veep	—	11
	Wendron	27	35
Devon	Hartland	—	2
	Manaton	—	33
Dorset	Cheselbourne	3	10
	Stoke Abbott	—	11
Gloucestershire	Alderley	—	2
	Bisley with Lypiatt	26	35
	Boxwell with Leighterton	—	30
	Coates	—	5
	Edgeworth	1	3
	North Nibley	1	—
	Nympsfield	1	—
	Painswick	—	9
	Prestbury	11	5
	Standish	40	—
	Stinchcombe	8	—
	Stroud	—	17
	Uley	6	3
	Whittington	17	—
	Wotton Under Edge	—	45
Somerset	Cheddar	—	10
Wiltshire	Box	10	4
	Compton Bassett	20	—
	North Wraxall	10	—
Dyfed	Bettws Evan	—	6
	Llangeler	1	7

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many badgers were removed in 1986 and 1987, by parish, for which prior approval of the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis was required.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 25 April 1988]*: The number of badgers taken in parishes where prior approval of the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis was required are as follows:

County	Parish	Number of badgers taken 1986	1987
Avon	Pucklechurch	15	—
Cornwall	Davidstowe	—	6
	Menheniot	—	—
	St. Martin	—	7
Devon	Holsworthy	—	31
	Milton Damerel	—	7
	Sutcombe	—	5
	Thornbury	—	15
Gloucester	Brookthorpe	—	17
	Duntisbourne Rouse	—	45
	Moreton Valence	8	—
Somerset	Rodney Stoke	—	12
	Westbury sub Mendip	—	52
Wiltshire	Brokenborough	—	46
	Malmesbury St. Paul without	—	1
	Sherston	—	12
Dyfed	Llanddarog	—	3
	Llanwinio	—	2

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Taxation

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish tables comparable to those published to indicate the effect of the Budget income tax tables, continuing up to income of £2,000 per week, illustrating the tax and national insurance position of couples in 1989-90 both having income from employment and also where the wife's income is derived from investments and showing the tax and national insurance position and the resultant net income for couples over the same range of incomes after the introduction of independent taxation in 1990.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Illustrative examples of the effects of independent taxation for non-aged taxpayers at various levels of income up to £2,000 per week are given in the tables. They are based on income tax and national insurance contribution rates for 1988-89. The tables include two illustrations of the possible distribution of the amount of income between husband and wife.

Comparisons between the proposed 1988-89 regime and independent taxation

£ per week

	NIC		*Income tax*			*Net income*	
Total income	*Husband's income*	*Wife's income*	*Husband's*	*Wife's*	*Existing joint tax charge*	*Independent taxation Husband's tax*	*Wife's tax*	*Existing regime*	*After independent taxation*
1. Total income split 50-50 per cent. between husband and wife. Income all earned									
100	50	50	2·50	2·50	·00	·00	·00	95·00	95·00
200	100	100	7·00	7·00	17·79	5·31	12·48	168·21	168·21
400	200	200	18·00	18·00	67·79	30·31	37·48	296·21	296·21
800	400	400	27·45	27·45	174·95	80·31	87·48	570·15	577·31
1,000	500	500	27·45	27·45	248·58	112·83	124·29	696·52	707·98
1,500	750	750	27·45	27·45	448·58	212·83	224·29	996·52	1,007·98
2,000	1,000	1,000	27·45	27·45	648·58	312·83	324·29	1,296·52	1,307·98
2. Total income split 75-25 per cent. between husband and wife. Income all earned									
100	75	25	5·25	·00	·00	·00	·00	94·75	94·75
200	150	50	13·50	2·50	17·81	17·81	·00	166·19	166·19
400	300	100	27·00	7·00	67·79	55·31	12·48	298·21	298·21
800	600	200	27·45	18·00	201·76	152·83	37·48	552·79	564·25
1,000	[illegible]	250	27·45	22·50	274·26	212·83	49·98	675·79	687·25
1,500	1,125	375	27·45	27·45	455·51	362·83	81·23	989·59	1,001,05
2,000	1,500	500	27·45	27·45	648·58	512·83	124·29	1,296·52	1,307·98
3. Total income split 50-50 per cent. between husband and wife. Husband's income all earned and wife's income all investment income[1]									
100	50	50	2·50	·00	5·31	·00	·00	92·19	97·50
200	100	100	7·00	·00	30·31	5·31	12·48	162·69	175·21
400	200	200	18·00	·00	80·31	30·31	37·48	301·69	314·21
800	400	400	27·45	·00	232·83	80·31	87·48	539·72	604·76
1,000	500	500	27·45	·00	312·83	112·83	124·29	659·72	735·43
1,500	750	750	27·45	·00	512·83	212·83	224·29	959·72	1,035·43
2,000	1,000	1,000	27·45	·00	712·83	312·83	324·29	1,259·72	1,335·43
4. Total income split 75-25 per cent. between husband and wife. Husband's income all earned and wife's income all investment income[1]									
100	75	25	5·25	·00	5·31	·00	·00	89·44	94·75
200	150	50	13·50	·00	30·31	17·81	·00	[illegible]·19	168·69
400	300	100	27·00	·00	80·31	55·31	12·48	292·69	305·21
800	600	200	27·45	·00	232·83	152·83	37·48	539·72	582·25
1,000	750	250	27·45	·00	312·83	212·83	49·98	659·72	709·75
1,500	1,125	375	27·45	·00	512·83	362·83	81·23	959·72	1,028·50
2,000	1,500	500	27·45	·00	712·83	512·83	124·29	1,259·72	1,335·43

[1] Assumed paid gross.

Government Departments and Agencies (Re-location)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Government Departments and agencies have been transferred from London and the south-east of England to the regions since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's dispersal programme since 1979 has included significant transfers of Civil Service posts from London to regions outside the south-east, by the following Departments and agencies:

Export Credits Guarantee Department (to Cardiff)
Health and Safety Executive (to Bootle)
Her Majesty's Stationery Office (to Norwich)
Home Office (to Bootle)
Manpower Services Commission (to Sheffield)
Ministry of Defence (to Glasgow)
Overseas Development Administration (to East Kilbride)
Property Services Agency (to Bootle)

Details of dispersals undertaken on Departments' own initiatives are not held centrally. However, Her Majesty's Land Registry opened a new office in Hull in 1987; the Department of Trade and Industry recently announced plans to relocate the Patent Office to Newport; and the Department of Health and Social Security has created a large number of new jobs at its Newcastle central office and at its family credit centre at North Fylde.

Interest Rates

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning the level of interest rates in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this subject.

THE ARTS

Merseyside Arts Association

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will provide money additional to the 2 per cent. increase in development funds for the Merseyside regional arts associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* No. It is for the Arts Council to determine the distribution of its grant.

Distance Learning Scheme

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much money he has allocated to his Department's distance learning scheme.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* Negotiations are continuing between the Arts Council and the Institute of Marketing, which are to provide the distance learning package. No figure has yet been agreed, but it is likely to be in the region of £100,000.

EMPLOYMENT

Availability for Work Test

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether individuals who are on the community programme who choose to leave when the adult training scheme is introduced in September will be liable to benefit loss under the availability for work test.

Mr. Nicholls: Participants who join the community programme (CP) from the end of February are entitled to six months on that programme. We have already made it clear that the new employment training programme is to be a voluntary one. Those CP participants who choose not to take advantage of the new programme at the end of their time on CP will not be liable to benefit loss under the availability for work test.

Inter-union Disputes

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans for further legislation to limit the effects of inter-union disputes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the United Kingdom's largest 100 employers hold permits exempting them from the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944; how many of these *(a)* hold permits covering multiple outlets — operational sites and *(b)* do not hold exemption permits and who are failing to meet their quota obligations; and how such companies are being encouraged to meet their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Lee: The information requested about the 100 largest employers is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In Great Britain the Department of Employment's employment service established a major organisations development unit in October 1987. This maintains contact with major employers at senior, head office, level and influences and assists large companies in the adoption of good practices in the employment of people with disabilities. At a local level, the employment service's disablement advisory service also promotes vigorously the employment of people with disabilities. In Northern Ireland these functions are undertaken by the Department of Economic Development's disablement resettlement officers.

South Korea

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many hours there are in the average working week in South Korea, and on the average wage there.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information relates to 1986 and is published by the International Labour Office in its "Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1987." In non-agricultural activities, average hours worked per week by employees are shown as 52·5 and average earnings per month as 350,966 Won, approximately £63 per week.

Retail Workers

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workers in retail are *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time; and what were the comparable figures five years previously.

Mr. Lee: In December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the proportions of full-time and part-time employees in employment in the retail distribution industry in Great Britain were 54 per cent. and 46 per cent. respectively. There are no comparable estimates for December 1982 but comparable figures from the 1981 census of employment show that in September 1981 the proportions were 60 per cent. and 40 per cent. The figures have not been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

Training Schemes

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if people who *(a)* complete a course on the adult training strategy and *(b)* come off training courses prior to completion will be entitled to claim unemployment or supplementary benefit.

Mr. Nicholls: People who have completed their time in employment training or have left the programme early and who have not secured a job will be entitled to claim unemployment benefit or income support provided that they meet the statutory conditions for entitlements to these benefits.

Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the enterprise agencies.

Mr. Cope: There are now over 400 local enterprise agencies in the United Kingdom. This Department, through the local enterprise agency grant scheme, is encouraging the development of a network of viable agencies in England; 200 agencies were supported under the scheme in the 1987-88 financial year.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people took up offers under the enterprise allowance scheme during the past 12 months; and what plans he has for extending this scheme.

Mr. Cope: During the year April 1987 to March 1988, 106,305 people joined the scheme; 110,000 places will be available during the current year.

There are no plans at present to alter the main eligibility rules of the scheme.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people aged 16 to 18 years were unemployed in the London borough of Lewisham at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: On 14 January 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Lewisham aged 16 to 18 years was 1,004.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of persons under the age of 23 years, by sex, who have been registered as unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* between six and 12 months and *(c)* more than 12 months.

Mr. Lee: The following information is available in the Library. Unemployment figures are not available for the age range requested. However, the table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants under 25 years, by sex and duration, in the United Kingdom on the latest date available, 14 January 1988.

Unemployed

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
Less than 6 months	315,330	205,569	520,899
6 to 12 months	97,328	60,279	157,607
Over 12 months	144,392	70,419	214,811
TOTAL	557,050	336,267	893,317

Family Expenditure Survey

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to issue further data from the 1986 family expenditure survey.

Mr. Cope: Yes. Since the report on the 1986 survey was published on 30 December 1987, it has been discovered that, because of a fault in a computer programme, average weekly household expenditure in 1986 was overstated by £6·92; the published figure is £185·02 whereas the revised estimate is £178·10.

An announcement of what has happened will appear in this month's *Employment Gazette*, together with revised data for broad groups of expenditure. The June *Gazette* will contain an article providing more detailed revised data.

Corrected results from the 1986 survey will be made available in early July, free of charge to those customers who have purchased a copy of the original report.

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS Staff

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number and cost of administrative and clerical staff employed in the National Health Service by each district health authority; and what is this cost expressed relative to the population in each district.

Mr. Newton: Information for district health authorities in England and which relates to 1986-87 (the latest years available) is shown in the table.

Administrative and clerical staff

	Whole time equivalents	*Cost £000*	*Cost relative to population £*
Northern Region			
Total	6,263	49,646	16
Hartlepool	177	1,395	15
North Tees	342	2,453	14
South Tees	575	4,387	15
East Cumbria	301	2,325	13
South Cumbria	274	2,047	12
West Cumbria	229	1,687	12
Darlington	270	2,017	16
Durham	274	2,771	12
North West Durham	156	1,225	14
South West Durham	252	2,034	13
Northumberland	441	3,464	12
Gateshead	278	2,236	11
Newcastle	1,163	8,328	30
North Tyneside	239	1,812	9
South Tyneside	216	1,729	11

	Whole time equivalents	Cost £000	Cost relative to population £
Sunderland	626	4,627	16
Yorkshire Region			
Total	7,024	56,508	16
Hull	601	4,389	14
East Yorkshire	311	2,561	14
Grimsby	285	2,153	14
Scunthorpe	276	1,993	10
Northallerton	125	1,014	9
York	469	3,871	15
Scarborough	197	1,624	11
Harrogate	265	1,988	15
Bradford	584	4,808	14
Airedale	274	2,218	13
Calderdale	291	2,241	12
Huddersfield	409	3,161	15
Dewsbury	251	1,897	12
Leeds Western	764	6,099	17
Leeds Eastern	773	5,945	17
Wakefield	386	3,227	23
Pontefract	255	2,095	13
Trent Region			
Total	8,900	71,906	16
North Derbyshire	402	3,067	8
Southern Derbyshire	830	6,659	13
Leicestershire	1,440	11,146	13
North Lincolnshire	499	3,837	14
South Lincolnshire	422	3,363	11
Bassetlaw	134	1,136	11
Central Nottinghamshire	449	3,568	13
Nottingham	1,247	10,941	18
Barnsley	330	3,613	12
Doncaster	427	3,321	11
Rotherham	332	2,668	11
Sheffield	1,448	10,691	20
East Anglian Region			
Total	4,030	32,221	16
Cambridge	739	5,651	21
Peterborough	423	3,045	15
West Suffolk	346	2,760	12
East Suffolk	557	4,247	13
Norwich	769	6,072	13
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	343	2,702	14
West Norfolk and Wisbech	300	2,334	13
Huntingdon	224	1,713	13
North West Thames Region			
Total	7,736	69,017	20
North Bedfordshire	411	3,056	12
South Bedfordshire	450	3,271	12
North Hertfordshire	219	1,673	9
East Hertfordshire	272	2,323	8
North West Hertfordshire	588	4,849	19
South West Hertfordshire	331	2,373	10
Barnet	677	6,342	21
Harrow	416	3,123	15
Hillingdon	575	5,008	22
Hounslow and Spelthorne	582	4,857	17
Ealing	404	4,020	14
Brent	568	4,592	18
Paddington and North Kensington	629	6,937	58
Riverside	1,246	12,889	45
North East Thames Region			
Total	9,794	89,209	24
Basildon and Thurrock	498	3,744	13
Mid Essex	468	3,838	13
North East Essex	621	4,587	15
West Essex	391	2,982	12
Southend	580	3,735	12
Barking Havering and Brentwood	705	5,623	12
Hampstead	627	5,868	54

	Whole time equivalents	Cost £000	Cost relative to population £
Bloomsbury	1,159	12,692	97
Islington	486	4,863	29
City and Hackney	852	7,914	41
Newham	331	3,385	17
Tower Hamlets	803	7,473	49
Enfield	363	3,189	12
Haringey	461	3,753	19
Redbridge	353	3,448	15
Waltham Forest	553	5,244	24
South East Thames Region			
Total	8,946	79,171	22
Brighton	710	5,564	19
Eastbourne	370	3,035	13
Hastings	326	2,630	16
South East Kent	396	3,180	12
Canterbury and Thanet	569	4,399	15
Dartford and Gravesham	434	3,519	16
Maidstone	370	2,740	14
Medway	482	3,654	11
Tunbridge Wells	426	3,460	18
Bexley	431	3,472	16
Greenwich	575	4,950	23
Bromley	497	4,242	14
West Lambeth	770	8,135	50
Camberwell	742	7,302	34
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,262	12,402	39
South West Thames Region			
Total	5,909	64,371	22
North West Surrey	368	3,516	17
West Surrey and North East Hants	361	2,784	10
South West Surrey	364	2,996	16
Mid Surrey	296	2,808	17
East Surrey	344	3,016	16
Chichester	325	2,532	14
Mid Downs	380	3,006	11
Worthing	335	2,612	11
Croydon	490	4,779	15
Kingston and Esher	356	3,357	19
Richmond Twickenham and Roehampton	331	3,318	14
Wandsworth	809	7,714	41
Merton and Sutton	596	5,316	16
Wessex Region			
Total	5,442	46,009	16
East Dorset	696	5,999	14
West Dorset	332	2,770	14
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	826	6,295	12
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,026	7,934	19
Winchester	324	3,659	18
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	376	3,104	14
Salisbury	298	2,279	19
Swindon	388	3,491	15
Bath	657	5,437	14
Isle of Wight	205	1,975	16
Oxford Region			
Total	4,662	36,815	15
East Berkshire	505	3,975	11
West Berkshire	683	5,257	12
Aylesbury Vale	367	2,930	21
Wycombe	315	2,431	9
Milton Keynes	236	1,826	11
Kettering	331	2,320	9
Northampton	567	4,262	14
Oxfordshire	1,127	8,226	15
South Western Region			
Total	6,732	53,519	17
Bristol and Weston	1,130	8,004	22

	# Whole time equivalents	Cost £000	Cost relative to population £
Frenchay	548	4,417	20
Southmead	474	4,076	18
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	580	4,678	10
Exeter	713	5,556	18
North Devon	247	1,781	14
Plymouth	700	5,393	16
Torbay	406	3,220	14
Cheltenham and District	311	2,653	13
Gloucester	581	4,126	13
Somerset	611	4,739	12
West Midlands Region			
Total	11,283	89,718	17
Bromsgrove and Redditch	288	2,324	14
Herefordshire	257	2,057	13
Kidderminster and District	238	1,779	18
Worcester and District	475	3,457	15
Shropshire	604	4,348	11
Mid Staffordshire	416	3,149	10
North Staffordshire	805	5,881	13
South East Staffordshire	428	3,122	12
Rugby	116	966	11
North Warwickshire	299	2,387	14
South Warwickshire	420	3,499	16
Central Birmingham	891	6,435	36
East Birmingham	471	3,222	16
North Birmingham	358	2,615	16
South Birmingham	678	4,816	19
West Birmingham	600	4,744	22
Coventry	616	4,593	15
Dudley	587	4,132	14
Sandwell	410	3,111	10
Solihull	308	2,300	11
Walsall	405	3,197	12
Wolverhampton	550	3,800	15
Mersey Region			
Total	5,306	41,784	17
Chester	409	3,128	18
Crewe	372	2,860	12
Halton	173	1,503	11
Macclesfield	303	2,361	13
Warrington	379	3,061	17
Liverpool	1,308	9,876	20
St. Helens and Knowsley	529	4,008	11
Southport and Formby	232	1,884	16
South Sefton	488	3,681	20
Wirral	623	4,542	13
North Western Region			
Total	9,563	74,833	19
Lancaster	381	2,904	22
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	497	3,749	12
Preston	626	4,587	37
Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	550	4,304	16
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale	433	3,032	13
West Lancashire	234	1,735	16
Chorley and South Ribble	149	1,153	6
Bolton	418	3,022	12
Bury	247	1,577	9
North Manchester	589	4,248	29
Central Manchester	685	5,123	41
South Manchester	923	6,362	35
Oldham	393	2,875	13
Rochdale	284	2,132	10
Salford	722	5,385	23
Stockport	464	3,451	12
Tameside and Glossop	324	2,335	10
Trafford	360	2,645	12
Wigan	498	3,672	12

Sources:
1. DHSS (SR7) annual census of NHS non medical manpower (staff in post at 30 September 1986).
2. Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities—1986-87.

3. Mid year estimates of populations—1986 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes to the Table:
1. All RHA tables include
   (a) General Managers.
   (b) Regional totals include Regional Headquarters and Units Staff.
   (c) Figures are rounded to the nearest whole time equivalent.
2. The staff numbers and costs (essentially expenditure on pay including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions) shown in the table include all directly employed staff in the diversity of grades whose pay negotiations are dealt with by the Administrative and Clerical Staff Whitley Council together with general managers and non National Health Service (agency, etc.) administrative and clerical staff.
3. Each region's totals include figures for regional headquarters and unit staff in addition to the totals for the districts.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many individuals in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency have lost housing benefit since the change in the Social Security Act on 1 April; and what is the total amount of housing benefit lost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients have had their housing benefit *(a)* withdrawn or *(b)* reduced in the Wakefield metropolitan district.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether payments of transitional protection to claimants of housing benefit will be made as regular weekly payments or some other basis; and what period he expects a transitional protection certificate to cover;

(2) what further subsidy he is offering to local authorities to compensate them for the administration needed to implement the certification process associated with the scheme of transitional protection for housing benefit; when he expects the scheme to be in operation; and what guidance he has issued in the meantime to local authorities on collection of the new higher rent and rate payments due.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 3 May 1988.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have had their housing benefit *(a)* withdrawn or *(b)* reduced in the Walsall metropolitan borough.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state the number in each region of the United Kingdom who have had their housing benefit withdrawn because their savings exceed £6,000; and if he will also give the number who have had their housing benefit reduced because their savings exceed £3,000;

(2) if he will state the number of those who have lost housing benefit arising from the recent legislative changes in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Rates (Payments)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider for the elderly and disabled direct payments of rates from pensions to the appropriate authority.

Mr. Portillo: We have no plans to do so.

Methadone (Hydrochloride)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the amount of Methadone (Hydrochloride) prescribed in the National Health Service each year since 1975 to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Newton: The number of prescriptions and the volumes of Methadone dispensed by community pharmacists in England in each of the years 1975 to 1986 inclusive is as follows:

Methadone (thousands) — *England*

Year	*Number of Prescriptions*	*Quantities prescribed* *Tablets*	*Mixture*[1] *(ml)*	*Linctus*[2] *(ml)*	*Injection (ampules)*
1975	135·4	1,634·7	9,542·3	7,529·0	2,004·4
1976	85·7	1,570·3	2,200·5	6,313·9	612·2
1977	114·6	1,380·8	6,978·0	5,991·1	1,472·5
1978	95·4	1,478·6	5,072·5	6,227·2	620·3
1979	90·3	833·4	7,511·5	4,012·1	862·9
1980	93·6	1,249·2	5,896·4	5,945·1	793·1
1981	78·6	1,321·6	11,826·5	4,459·9	1,124·9
1982	95·1	1,016·4	7,689·9	9,037·4	650·0
1983	105·9	1,443·0	10,064·9	6,713·0	502·6
1984	101·9	1,217·9	11,716·3	6,775·2	588·7
1985	128·6	1,048·6	17,329·8	5,538·4	399·1
1986	184·9	1,740·0	26,738·9	4,863·4	1,175·3

Note:
These estimates are based on a sample of approximately 1 in 200 prescriptions dispensed in England by chemists and appliance contractors. Information on drugs dispensed in hospitals and by Dispensing doctors is not available.
[1] The mixture is 1mg/ml.
[2] The linctus is 2mg/5ml.

Independent Living Fund

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what he anticipates will be the number of claimants receiving help from the Independent Living Fund *(a)* in 1988-89 and *(b)* in a full year; and how these figures have been derived;

(2) whether payments from the Independent Living Fund will be treated as income for the purposes of calculating housing benefit entitlement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 3 May.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the £5 million budget for the Independent Living Fund he anticipates will be spent on administration.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 29 April at column *337*.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether payments from the Independent Living Fund are available to claimants who were not receiving disability benefits prior to or on 11 April.

Mr. Scott: Yes.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether community care grants from the social fund will be taken into account when assessing entitlement to a payment from the Independent Living Fund;

(2) whether he expects there to be *(a)* a maximum and *(b)* a minimum sum for a claim from the Independent Living Fund;

(3) how entitlement to payments from the Independent Living Fund will be calculated for *(a)* someone in receipt of income support and *(b)* someone not on income support.

Mr. Scott: These will be matters for the trustees to determine.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether applicants to the Independent Living Fund will routinely be referred to the social fund.

Mr. Scott: I expect the trustees will wish to inform applicants of their possible entitlement to other forms of help where appropriate. However the social fund cannot make payments for domestic assistance and respite care.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether applications to the Independent Living Fund will be accepted from people who have applied to the social fund and been refused a payment.

Mr. Scott: The eligibility criteria do not preclude payments to such people. It will be for the trustees to determine what weight is to be given to such factors.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he expects payments from the Independent Living Fund to be made from his Department's local offices; and whether payment will be by order book or giro.

Mr. Scott: Payments from the Independent Living Fund will not be made from the Department's local offices. It will be for the trustees to determine the method and frequency of payments.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Independent Living Fund will be able to make *(a)* one-off payments and *(b)* regular weekly payments; and for what period of time he envisages regular payments being made.

Mr. Scott: The Independent Living Fund is primarily intended to help severely disabled people pay for domestic or personal care. The fund's eligibility criteria do not place restrictions on the type of payments that may be made. It will be for the trustees to determine what form of payment is appropriate in each case.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether claimants will still be able to receive payments from the Independent Living Fund if they are *(a)* being cared for by someone receiving independent living assistance and *(b)* receiving any assistance from a local authority home help.

Mr. Scott: This will be a matter for the trustees to decide. However the Independent Living Fund's eligibility criteria provide that that part of personal care and domestic assistance provided by a local authority is not normally eligible for help from the fund.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what costs of disability will be covered by payments from the Independent Living Fund; and whether the fund will make payments to cover housing costs, debts or essential household equipment if these are judged necessary to prevent the claimant from entering an institution;

(2) what is the definition of living alone for the purposes of entitlement to payment from the Independent Living Fund.

Mr. Scott: These will be matters for the trustees to determine in the light of the eligibility criteria which were published in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on 31 March at columns *659-60*.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence claimants to the Independent Living Fund will be required to provide to support their claim; and whether they will be visited to assess that evidence.

Mr. Scott: The precise details will be for the trustees to determine. However it is envisaged that applicants will be visited by a social worker experienced in matters relating to disability to make an assessment of their care needs and offer other advice as appropriate.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services for how long he anticipates the Independent Living Fund will be in existence.

Mr. Scott: I anticipate that the duration of the fund will be in the region of three to five years.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services from where he anticipates the Independent Living Fund will be administered; and where, once it is in operation, claimants will make application.

Mr. Scott: It is proposed that the Independent Living Fund will be administered from offices in Nottingham and that applications will be made by post to a PO box address. These arrangements are subject to ratification by the trustees.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects guidelines to be available for trustees of the Independent Living Fund; and whether they will be published.

Mr. Scott: The rules governing the operation of the Independent Living Fund will be set out in the fund's eligibility criteria and trust deed. The eligibility criteria were published in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on 31 March at columns *659-60*. The trust deed will be subject to approval by the Charity Commissioners and will be available for public inspection in the usual way.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Independent Living Fund to be constituted; when he anticipates regulations covering its operation will be laid; and whether they will be available in draft for consultation or comment.

Mr. Scott: The Independent Living Fund will be constituted shortly. The provisions establishing the fund

and the rules governing its operation will be contained in the trust deed, which will be subject to approval by the Charity Commissioners and available for public inspection in the usual way. Regulations will however be laid to ensure that payments from the fund are disregarded in calculating entitlement to income support, family credit, and housing benefit.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what briefing has been issued to local offices to enable them to advise claimants who should apply to the Independent Living Fund for assistance; what publicity his Department intends to give the fund; and what expenditure on that publicity will be.

Mr. Scott: A letter has been written to regional controllers drawing their attention to the purpose of the fund and advising that people enquiring in local offices about the fund should be instructed to write to its temporary address: c/o room 520 New court, Carey street, London, WC2A 2LS.

For details of other action undertaken or proposed to publicise the fund I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 29 April, at column *338*. The publicity budget has not yet been settled.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the tear-off slip attached to form SB1(1988) will be accepted as a claim for income support.

Mr. Portillo: Yes.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are receiving full income support to cover *(a)* rest home fees and *(b)* nursing home fees.

Mr. Portillo: There were 84,500 people claiming supplementary benefit in residential care homes in May 1987, and 32,300 in nursing homes. Information is not available about the number of these receiving only supplementary benefit; many supplementary benefit or income support claimants have other income to help meet the fees of their home, including contributory or other benefits. For those who qualify, the income-related benefit is paid in addition to this up to prescribed limits.

Social Workers (Education and Training)

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to respond to the proposals from the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work for reforms to the education and training for social workers and other care staff.

Mr. Newton: I wrote yesterday to Professor Saul setting out the Government's position in response to the proposals of "Care for Tomorrow". The letter indicates that, while the Government do not feel able to commit resources to the extension of qualifying training for social workers to three years, as proposed by CCETSW, we wish to work closely with the council in developing a balanced package of improvement not only to improve qualifying training, but also to improve the skills of staff already working in the field.

The training support programme announced by the Government last November is an important step already taken in relation to those working in the care of elderly people. The Health and Medicines Bill includes powers which would enable us to make similar provision in the field of child care. We are making up to £1 million available to CCETSW to improve planning and co-operation between the colleges and employers and review the standards of teaching of various aspects of social work. We are also providing support for a variety of other initiatives aimed at extending the availability of training for social services staff in a number of specialist areas such as mental health and mental handicap and child abuse.

In developing qualifying training, our view is that the most important immediate objectives are to improve the quality and availability of "practice placements" and to move to a uniform two-year training period for postgraduates. We attach high priority to both of these. We are seeking the help of the council to develop detailed proposals for phased development over a five-year period starting in 1989-90.

These further measures, building on improvements already taking place, should help to ensure a better prepared and therefore more competent staff for the personal social services. The full text of my letter is as follows:

"CARE FOR TOMORROW: THE CCETSW TRAINING REFORM PROPOSALS

I am grateful to you, Tony Hall and Rachel Pierce for coming to see me on 20 April. We agreed that it would be helpful if I were to let you have a statement of the Government's position before your Council session on 4 May.

I was able to assure you that the Government agrees that there is a need for improvement in training for the social services. The employers of social services staff have an important role to play in this, as does CCETSW. For social work staff this is necessary both at the qualifying and post-qualifying stages, and more training opportunities are vital for the other staff employed in the social services. We have already introduced a training support programme for staff working with elderly people with that in mind.

We welcome the considerable effort the Council has already put into specifying what needs to be attained by student social workers at the point of qualification; improving planning and co-operation between the colleges and the employers and reviewing the standards of teaching of the various aspects of social work. These are all essential elements in getting the most from the existing public investment in the preparation of social workers. We very much want to encourage and support this work, and the developments that flow from it. We also welcome the contribution being made by CCETSW to the development of the National Vocational Qualification framework. I told you that the Government's financial allocation to CCETSW for this financial year is being increased by up to £1 million to enable the programme of improvements to increase in scale. I asked you to let officials have an action plan for this programme of improvements for their agreement.

We had, in our earlier correspondence, asked CCETSW to provide a set of costed options to enable Ministers to form a view of their relative benefits. In the event the Council provided a single package of measures in its Care for Tomorrow proposals. We discussed those, and I made it clear that the Government did not feel able to make financial provision for the proposals it contains for the extension to three years of qualifying training for social workers. I explained that this conclusion was based principally on our assessment of the relative priority of this development for future generations of social workers among the many other competing calls on public resources in the short to medium term, both in the social services and in other fields, including not least those needed to improve the skills of existing social care staff in such fields as residential care of the elderly and child care.

You made it clear that three years training was essential in the view of the Council in order adequately to prepare social workers for the tasks they face, and that its achievement would remain your long-term goal.

Against this background, I am concerned to respond to your request for a firm steer on where and how to concentrate planning effort in getting a practical programme of improvement in social work training under way. Our view, which I think you share, is that the two most important objectives in the short-term are to improve the quality and availability of "practice placements" and to move to a uniform two-year training period for postgraduates, both of which have the advantage of building on developments already taking place.

I acknowledge that both require a measure of direct government encouragement or sponsorship, especially in advance of employment-led NVQ arrangements becoming a reality. You understand that I cannot commit myself to specific sums in advance of public expenditure discussions, which will not be completed until the autumn; but I can tell you that I attach very high priority indeed to finding the resources to make significant progress in these two respects, with a start being made from 1989-90. I hope therefore that the Council will bring forward proposals quickly for a phased programme to secure these improvements over a five-year period.

I recognise that you and your Council would have wished us simply to accept the programme set out in "Care for Tomorrow". But I hope that you and they will recognise in turn that the important steps we are suggesting are consistent with the Council's long-term goal, and indeed can be seen as substantial progress towards it. I hope too that the arrangements that we have set in train for an annual programme and performance review will provide a good framework for us to work together in building further on this progress in due course.

Accident and Emergency Service (Sheffield)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the Sheffield district health authority retains a full accident and emergency service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* Management of local health services is the responsibility of the district health authority concerned. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Sheffield health authority for the information he seeks. However I understand that there has been a rota for accident and emergency services in Sheffield since 1976 and the current rota has been in operation since 1981. Although it has been reviewed from time to time, it is still regarded locally as the most efficient way of serving the city's needs.

Kidney Donor Cards

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons who were kidney donors in the past year were carrying, or in possession of, kidney donor cards.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* This information is not available centrally. The total number of organ transplant operations carried out in 1987 (as notified to the United Kingdom transplant service) was 1,972, which was again a record. The total number of cards issued in 1987 was approx 5·5 million. The value of the organ donor card cannot be assessed solely by the extent to which it is found on donors. It has proved a useful publicity tool in making the general public aware of the need for organ donation. It also encourages those who would be willing to be donors to discuss their wishes with their relatives so that, even if a card is not found, they will be receptive to, or perhaps initiate, a suggestion that organs should be donated. We are currently emphasising this aspect of the card in our publicity.

Some 3 million cards have been issued in the first four months of 1988 and transplants appear to be approximately 57 per cent. higher than in the same period last year.

Benefits and Grants

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what have been the figures for expenditure on supplementary benefits, urgent needs provision, maternity grants, death grants and all other benefits which now come under the social fund, for each year since 1974.

Mr. Portillo [*pursuant to his reply, 25 April 1988, c. 33-34*]: I regret that some of the information relating to maternity grants and death grants was wrong. The table sets out the correct data.

Year	*Urgent needs payments £ million*	*Maternity grants £ million*	*Death grants £ million*	*Single payments £ million*
1974-75	n/a	16	n/a	n/a
1975-76	n/a	16	16	n/a
1976-77	n/a	15	n/a	n/a
1977-78	n/a	15	n/a	n/a
1978-79	n/a	16	16	n/a
1979-80	n/a	16	16	40
1980-81	n/a	16	16	48
1981-82	n/a	16	17	57
1982-83	n/a	16	17	98
1983-84	n/a	17	17	166
1984-85	0·5	18	17	241
1985-86	0·4	17	18	335
1986-87	1·0	14	18	330

ENVIRONMENT

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Docklands development corporation spent last year on consultants; what percentage that sum was of total expenditure; how many consultancies were awarded; and how many of those involved competition.

Mr. Trippier: In 1987-88 LDDC made 225 consultancy appointments to 145 consultants at a value of £6·2 million plus associated costs. Total payments amounting to £12·1 million were made to 199 consultants in respect of appointments let in 1987-88 and previous years, which was about 10 per cent. of LDDC's expenditure. The LDDC is satisfied that the requirements for competition were met. The external audit for 1987-88 will provide an idependent scrutiny.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the London Docklands development corporation is doing to finance the building of new schools in docklands.

Mr. Trippier: The statutory responsibility for providing new schools rests with the local education authorities. The LDDC is continuing to consider with those authorities and other interested bodies what assistance it can provide to raise educational standards in docklands.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of the London Docklands development corporation for the disposal of its assets and responsibilities when it is wound up; and what directions he has given on these matters.

Mr. Trippier: The corporation will be guided by the Secretary of State in these matters. No directions have been given.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been adopted by the London Docklands development corporation to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the corporation and developers where members of the corporation's staff leave, or are intending to leave, to take up a post in the private sector with development companies.

Mr. Trippier: The corporation's code of conduct for its staff sets out requirements for the declaration of interests.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made by the London Docklands development corporation to safeguard the use of *(a)* the Millwall outer dock and *(b)* the Royal Victoria dock for water sports; what arrangements exist to assess possible conflict between developments and water sport uses; what is the development corporation's policy on current development proposals at these docks which adversely affect water sports users; how much the development corporation has invested in water sports facilities at these two locations; and what has been invested by (i) other public bodies and (ii) private companies.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for the disposal of land on the south side of the King George V docks by the London Docklands development corporation; at what price it has been sold or leased; and what restrictions have been placed on its future use.

Mr. Trippier: Some 22 acres of LDDC land in the area have been leased to London City airport. Part has been disposed of for mixed development and part for airport related uses, subject to planning permission and LDDC's detailed approval as landlord. The price paid for individual sites is commercially confidential information.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what area of water currently in the enclosed docks will be required for the Canary wharf scheme; what arrangements have been made for its disposal or leasing to the developers of Canary wharf by the London Docklands development corporation; and what price has been fixed.

Mr. Trippier: A small part of the West India dock water has been sold to the developers. The price is contained within the agreement outlined in my answer of 23 July 1987, at column *377*.

Pensions (Underpayment)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce legislation to ensure that local authority retired employees will receive compensation for the underpayment of their pensions from April 1987.

Mr. Chope: Pursuant to the statement made on 18 December 1987 by the Paymaster General (*Official Report*, columns *845-46*), my right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce such legislation. But in the light of the statement he has invited the local government employers to consider what action might be taken in respect of the local government superannuation scheme.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations took place between his Department and the Water Authorities Association prior to their commissioning of a survey from Hill and Knowlton on the interests of environmental bodies in water privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Rating Reform

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will answer the letter from the Prison Reform Trust dated 10 March regarding the eligibility of remand prisoners for the community charge.

Mr. Howard: A reply was sent to the Prison Reform Trust on 29 April. In accordance with the undertaking I gave at the Report stage of the Local Government Finance Bill. We are considering the possibility of exempting remand prisoners from the community charge.

Inner Cities

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response was received to the consultation document on the Government's proposal to introduce the new city grant for inner city projects.

Mr. Trippier: The responses to the consultation document which was issued by the Department on city grant on 7 March to local authorities, businesses and other interested persons and organisations was extremely encouraging. The proposal to simplify the grants system and speed up the handling of cases were warmly welcomed by the great majority of respondents.

A short summary of the written responses received has been placed today in the Libraries of the Houses of Parliament and, where respondents have explicitly authorised the Department to do so, copies of their responses have also been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

City grant will now operate in broadly the way proposed in the consultation document with a threshold of £200,000 project value. Copies of the guidance notes have also been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Palace of Westminster (Toilets)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield of 20 April, if he will take steps to ensure that those toilets in the Palace of Westminster which are marked as reserved for the exclusive use of hon. Members of Parliament also designate the gender for which they are reserved.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* I will draw this to the attention of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee.

London Boroughs (Properties)

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on *(a)* how many commercial and industrial buildings and sites are owned by each London borough, *(b)* how many of them are let, *(c)* how much rent they produce, *(d)* how many of them are empty and *(e)* whether the borough owns them freehold or leasehold.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not available to my Department.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 26 April regarding local authority gipsy sites in areas of outstanding natural beauty, if he will indicate for which of these sites he had considered what action to take under section 8 of the Caravan Sites Act.

Mrs. Roe: The sites at Redland depot, Robertsbridge and Chiseldon camp, Swindon were subject to directions under section 8 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Rates

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each English authority *(a)* their rate or precept for 1987-88 and 1988-89 expressed as pence in the pound, *(b)* the percentage change between the two above years, *(c)* the average rate or precept for 1987-88 and 1988-89 expressed as an average charge per domestic hereditament, *(d)* the average of *(a)* and *(c)* above and the percentage change between the two by class of authority and *(e)* the average of *(a)* and *(c)* above and the percentage change between the two by political control of authority.

Mr. Chope: The local rate for a district or borough is made up from the rate charged by the district itself together with the average of parish precepts and special district expenses and precepts charged by certain other specialised bodies such as waste disposal authorities. It does not include the precepts charged by higher tier authorities, for example, county councils in the shires, police, fire and civil defence and transport authorities in metropolitan areas and London, and the Inner London education authority.

The table sets out the available information:

Local Rates and Precepts 1987-88—1988-89

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	*Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)*	*Percentage change*	*Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament*	*Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament*	*Political control at 1.4.88*
Avon	228·50	246·50	7·9	422	456	None
Bedfordshire	232·20	246·40	6·1	544	577	None
Berkshire	178·50	193·60	8·5	466	505	Conservative
Buckinghamshire	208·50	227·70	9·2	579	632	Conservative
Cambridgeshire	206·00	216·00	4·9	429	450	None
Cheshire	211·00	232·00	10·0	430	473	None
Cleveland	252·00	282·00	11·9	413	462	Labour
Cornwall	184·00	207·70	12·9	288	325	None
Cumbria	246·50	260·00	5·5	329	347	None
Derbyshire	262·00	297·50	13·5	426	484	Labour
Devon	188·50	209·75	11·3	335	373	None
Dorset	189·00	203·00	7·4	409	439	Conservative
Durham	214·00	246·00	15·0	281	323	Labour
East Sussex	190·30	217·10	14·1	432	493	Conservative
Essex	199·50	235·00	17·8	493	580	None
Gloucestershire	194·26	217·30	11·9	372	417	None
Hampshire	184·10	200·30	8·8	400	436	None
Hereford and Worcester	168·50	185·00	9·8	365	401	Conservative
Hertfordshire	205·60	240·40	16·9	541	633	None
Humberside	217·00	261·00	20·3	326	392	None
Isle of Wight	207·14	227·23	9·7	366	402	Liberal

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1.4.88
Kent	170·60	192·00	12·5	322	362	Conservative
Lancashire	197·50	234·00	18·5	297	352	None
Leicestershire	199·30	221·20	11·0	381	423	None
Lincolnshire	179·00	204·00	14·0	291	332	Conservative
Norfolk	173·60	190·90	10·0	308	339	Conservative
Northamptonshire	199·00	229·00	15·1	389	448	Conservative
[1]Northumberland	200·70	230·10	14·6	310	355	None
North Yorkshire	194·00	217·00	11·9	306	342	Conservative
Nottinghamshire	236·00	253·00	7·2	384	412	Labour
Oxfordshire	218·30	238·60	9·3	503	550	None
Shropshire	184·00	200·00	8·7	331	359	None
Somerset	200·50	224·00	11·7	364	406	None
Staffordshire	198·50	215·00	8·3	373	404	Labour
Suffolk	189·00	204·00	7·9	361	390	Conservative
Surrey	183·50	202·70	10·5	517	571	Conservative
Warwickshire	196·00	227·10	15·9	453	525	None
West Sussex	176·00	192·00	9·1	387	422	Conservative
Wiltshire	203·40	219·30	7·8	357	385	None
Isles of Scilly	192·71	198·67	3·1	347	357	Independent
Greater Manchester						
Bolton	205·75	218·79	6·3	342	364	Labour
Bury	227·84	244·69	7·4	421	452	Labour
Manchester	316·14	285·63	−9·7	523	473	Labour
Oldham	217·00	239·01	10·1	316	348	Labour
Rochdale	262·14	281·59	7·4	371	399	Labour
Salford	237·14	257·59	8·6	404	439	Labour
Stockport	190·54	207·39	8·8	416	452	None
Tameside	248·83	268·50	7·9	364	392	Labour
Trafford	182·66	201·15	10·1	409	451	None
Wigan	246·71	270·17	9·5	384	421	Labour
Merseyside						
Knowsley	256·35	265·88	3·7	467	484	Labour
Liverpool	264·93	268·17	1·2	437	442	Labour
St. Helens	239·62	253·22	5·7	410	433	Labour
Sefton	202·70	217·76	7·4	419	450	None
Wirral	226·44	242·68	7·2	466	499	None
South Yorkshire						
Barnsley	239·76	261·18	8·9	286	312	Labour
Doncaster	244·29	264·53	8·3	339	367	Labour
Rotherham	244·97	263·66	7·6	329	354	Labour
Sheffield	259·06	290·35	12·1	356	399	Labour
Tyne and Wear/Gateshead	231·45	254·61	10·0	312	344	Labour
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	290·82	270·01	−7·2	457	424	Labour
North Tyneside	265·77	289·78	9·0	421	459	Labour
South Tyneside	234·71	254·55	8·5	333	361	Labour
Sunderland	255·00	264·58	3·8	348	361	Labour
West Midlands						
Birmingham	213·39	220·25	3·2	439	453	Labour
Coventry	232·01	250·55	8·0	456	492	Labour
Dudley	206·97	210·99	1·9	451	459	Labour
Sandwell	209·15	219·60	5·0	399	419	Labour
Solihull	169·94	170·69	0·4	465	467	Conservative
Walsall	228·85	239·50	4·7	480	502	None
Wolverhampton	211·00	218·30	3·5	464	480	None
West Yorkshire						
Bradford	250·00	277·60	11·0	317	352	Labour
Calderdale	240·33	283·91	18·1	275	325	None
Kirklees	233·23	265·35	13·8	273	311	None
Leeds	196·49	212·12	8·0	288	310	Labour
Wakefield	233·83	262·26	12·2	313	351	Labour
I.L.E.A.	79·73	81·80	2·6	243	249	Labour
City of London	64·43	67·06	4·1	339	353	Independent
Camden	120·07	117·00	−2·6	425	414	Labour
Greenwich	120·89	136·00	12·5	262	295	Labour
Hackney	123·30	134·72	9·3	309	338	Labour
Hammersmith and Fulham	126·70	133·32	5·2	315	331	Labour
Islington	78·90	89·65	13·6	237	270	Labour

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1.4.88
Kensington and Chelsea	5·73	4·22	−26·4	30	22	Conservative
Lambeth	112·42	92·32	−17·9	278	229	Labour
Lewisham	127·12	131·76	3·7	297	307	Labour
Southwark	111·32	101·00	−9·3	258	234	Labour
Tower Hamlets	110·38	123·21	11·6	283	316	Liberal
Wandsworth	27·43	36·12	31·7	69	90	Conservative
Westminster	51·23	51·02	−0·4	279	278	Conservative
Barking and Dagenham	170·76	181·36	6·2	371	394	Labour
Barnet	153·66	177·56	15·6	560	647	Conservative
Bexley	148·36	168·26	13·4	345	392	Conservative
Brent	224·84	248·96	10·7	634	702	Labour
Bromley	131·26	140·86	7·3	380	408	Conservative
Croydon	126·76	136·86	8·0	384	414	Conservative
Ealing	221·26	167·00	−24·5	598	451	Labour
Enfield	154·26	185·86	20·5	419	505	Conservative
Haringey	238·37	214·69	−9·9	596	537	Labour
Harrow	159·76	173·36	8·5	487	529	Conservative
Havering	145·76	157·36	8·0	394	426	None
Hillingdon	177·51	190·66	7·4	477	512	None
Hounslow	205·97	221·05	7·3	535	574	Labour
Kingston-upon-Thames	153·26	169·36	10·5	439	485	Conservative
Merton	136·26	151·02	10·8	377	417	Conservative
Newham	232·67	259·66	11·6	493	550	Labour
Redbridge	130·16	130·76	0·5	366	368	Conservative
Richmond-upon-Thames	162·63	179·99	10·7	471	522	Liberal
Sutton	163·26	178·86	9·6	448	491	Liberal
Waltham Forest	289·76	199·14	−31·3	673	463	Labour

[1] Excluding Northumbria Police Authority precept.

Local rates and precepts 1987-88 to 1988-89

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1 April 1988
Avon						
Bath	7·00	9·00	28·6	12	16	None
Bristol	41·25	47·44	15·0	71	81	Labour
Kingswood	16·39	16·51	0·7	30	30	Conservative
Northavon	22·58	24·72	9·5	44	48	Conservative
Wansdyke	11·50	12·43	8·1	23	24	Conservative
Woodspring	23·51	26·92	14·5	49	56	Conservative
Bedfordshire						
North Bedfordshire	22·20	22·40	0·9	48	48	Conservative
Luton	27·60	26·60	−3·6	67	64	Conservative
Mid Bedfordshire	22·61	23·84	5·4	52	54	Conservative
South Bedfordshire	24·58	27·65	12·5	62	70	Conservative
Berkshire						
Bracknell	14·41	14·84	3·0	37	38	Conservative
Newbury	13·56	15·11	11·4	34	38	Conservative
Reading	23·00	28·00	21·7	51	63	Labour
Slough	10·31	10·33	0·2	24	24	Labour
Windsor and Maidenhead	16·10	16·14	0·2	47	47	Conservative
Wokingham	17·55	22·71	29·4	52	68	Conservative
Buckinghamshire						
Aylesbury Vale	12·49	12·69	1·6	29	30	Conservative
South Buckinghamshire	13·48	16·36	21·4	50	60	Conservative
Chiltern	18·72	20·08	7·3	67	72	Conservative
Milton Keynes	28·44	29·55	3·9	61	63	None
Wycombe	15·18	15·64	3·0	45	47	Conservative
Cambridgeshire						
Cambridge	18·50	23·50	27·0	46	59	None
East Cambridgeshire	13·61	13·48	−1·0	24	24	Independent
Fenland	19·03	21·14	11·1	31	34	Conservative
Huntingdonshire	15·36	16·06	4·6	31	32	Conservative
Peterborough	34·00	37·00	8·8	63	68	None
South Cambridgeshire	13·91	14·14	1·7	36	37	Independent

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1 April 1988
Cheshire						
Chester	27·98	29·63	5·9	59	63	None
Congleton	26·39	27·75	5·2	55	58	None
Crewe and Nantwich	30·71	33·86	10·3	58	64	None
Ellesmere and Neston	30·00	31·50	5·0	63	66	Labour
Halton	31·93	33·53	5·0	56	59	Labour
Macclesfield	20·84	21·82	4·7	53	55	Conservative
Vale Royal	28·65	31·45	9·8	55	61	None
Warrington	31·67	35·08	10·8	58	65	Labour
Cleveland						
Hartlepool	36·02	40·02	11·1	51	57	Labour
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	43·33	48·41	11·7	72	80	None
Middlesbrough	44·56	32·16	−27·8	73	53	Labour
Stockton on Tees	30·18	37·17	23·2	52	65	Labour
Cornwall						
Caradon	19·55	23·82	21·8	31	38	Independent
Carrick	23·91	27·29	14·1	39	44	None
Kerrier	25·29	29·61	17·1	37	43	None
North Cornwall	22·82	25·68	12·5	37	41	Independent
Penwith	23·78	26·84	12·9	35	39	None
Restormel	21·58	22·67	5·1	35	37	None
Cumbria						
Allerdale	26·12	26·12	0·0	33	33	None
Barrow in Furness	30·22	35·22	16·5	34	40	Labour
Carlisle	30·70	30·79	0·3	43	43	Labour
Copeland	25·85	26·01	0·6	31	31	Labour
Eden	21·44	22·72	6·0	28	29	Independent
South Lakeland	19·34	19·48	0·7	31	31	None
Derbyshire						
Amber Valley	27·08	24·76	−8·6	42	38	None
Bolsover	45·73	50·23	9·8	60	66	Labour
Chesterfield	34·53	34·72	0·6	52	52	Labour
Derby	26·50	25·00	−5·7	48	45	Labour
Erewash	18·26	21·26	16·4	30	34	Conservative
High Peak	33·71	35·81	6·2	50	53	None
North East Derbyshire	39·19	46·15	17·8	63	75	Labour
South Derbyshire	24·34	26·29	8·0	42	46	Labour
Derbyshire Dales	25·56	29·12	13·9	45	52	Conservative
Devon						
East Devon	18·83	19·11	1·5	36	36	Conservative
Exeter	14·80	15·96	7·8	26	29	None
North Devon	24·21	26·91	11·2	35	39	None
Plymouth	18·50	21·50	16·2	35	41	Conservative
South Hams	23·72	25·57	7·8	42	46	Conservative
Teignbridge	23·45	26·67	13·7	42	48	None
Mid Devon	22·07	25·08	13·6	34	39	Independent
Torbay	32·30	34·50	6·8	64	69	Conservative
Torridge	27·00	27·28	1·0	34	35	Independent
West Devon	20·58	25·26	22·7	33	41	Independent
Dorset						
Bournemouth	25·00	25·00	0·0	55	55	Conservative
Christchurch	20·09	21·62	7·6	47	50	Conservative
North Dorset	13·67	17·05	24·7	25	32	Independent
Poole	18·00	19·00	5·6	43	45	Conservative
Purbeck	13·42	14·33	6·8	28	30	None
West Dorset	13·70	15·85	15·7	24	28	Independent
Weymouth and Portland	23·00	23·00	0·0	42	42	None
East Dorset	22·53	26·72	18·6	58	68	Conservative
Durham						
Chester le Street	40·84	43·82	7·3	61	65	Labour
Darlington	56·70	62·20	9·7	85	93	None
Derwentside	53·27	64·27	20·6	66	79	Labour
Durham	44·49	48·99	10·1	67	93	Labour
Easington	36·08	55·49	53·8	42	64	Labour
Sedgefield	60·80	66·60	9·5	77	85	Labour

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1 April 1988
Teesdale	19·08	20·93	9·7	22	24	Independent
Wear Valley	59·69	66·72	11·8	67	75	Labour
East Sussex						
Brighton	22·50	30·00	33·3	47	63	Labour
Eastbourne	26·60	26·60	0·0	65	65	Liberal
Hastings	24·80	26·00	4·8	48	51	None
Hove	0·00	4·90	—	0	12	Conservative
Lewes	21·38	22·81	6·7	52	55	Conservative
Rother	22·90	23·54	2·8	56	57	Conservative
Wealden	25·71	27·33	6·3	57	61	Conservative
Essex						
Basildon	52·84	49·68	−6·0	133	125	None
Braintree	19·55	22·96	17·4	41	48	None
Brentwood	19·87	18·87	−5·0	62	59	Conservative
Castle Point	18·00	19·00	5·6	45	48	Conservative
Chelmsford	14·36	19·55	36·1	38	51	Liberal
Colchester	14·65	16·84	14·9	32	37	None
Epping Forest	21·41	22·47	5·0	61	64	Conservative
Harlow	87·40	92·90	6·3	201	213	Labour
Maldon	20·12	18·91	−6·0	48	45	None
Rochford	23·09	26·53	14·9	62	71	Conservative
Southend-on-Sea	21·00	21·00	0·0	52	52	None
Tendring	24·92	25·04	0·5	53	53	Conservative
Thurrock	39·90	46·90	17·5	95	112	Labour
Uttlesford	21·07	21·60	2·5	56	57	Conservative
Gloucestershire						
Cheltenham	18·77	19·71	5·0	39	41	None
Cotswold	17·82	18·91	6·1	39	41	Independent
Forest of Dean	24·46	24·97	2·1	38	38	None
Gloucester	20·83	22·00	5·6	36	38	Conservative
Stroud	25·20	30·41	20·7	47	56	None
Tewkesbury	16·39	16·67	1·7	35	36	None
Hampshire						
Basingstoke & Deane	8·19	9·73	18·8	18	22	Conservative
East Hampshire	23·07	26·91	16·6	57	67	Conservative
Eastleigh	22·19	23·47	5·8	49	52	None
Fareham	26·00	28·00	7·7	63	67	None
Gosport	21·50	23·50	9·3	43	47	Conservative
Hart	32·38	36·34	12·2	89	100	None
Havant	19·80	24·10	21·7	45	55	Conservative
New Forest	24·30	29·25	20·4	51	61	Conservative
Portsmouth	29·00	30·00	3·4	53	55	Conservative
Rushmoor	26·00	25·00	−3·8	61	59	Conservative
Southampton	25·00	26·00	4·0	45	47	None
Test Valley	19·68	21·58	9·7	46	50	Conservative
Winchester	24·85	26·22	5·5	60	63	None
Hereford and Worcester						
Bromsgrove	17·51	20·16	15·1	44	51	Conservative
Hereford	23·80	15·80	−33·6	40	27	Liberal
Leominster	23·10	25·27	9·4	38	42	Independent
Malvern Hills	28·83	30·35	5·3	65	69	None
Redditch	34·01	36·51	7·4	73	79	Labour
South Herefordshire	16·02	16·40	2·4	29	30	Independent
Worcester	29·01	30·20	4·1	64	67	Labour
Wychavon	28·46	30·33	6·6	70	74	Conservative
Wyre Forest	32·90	37·38	13·6	68	77	None
Hertfordshire						
Broxbourne	22·25	22·25	0·0	54	54	Conservative
Dacorum	19·94	20·96	5·1	52	55	Conservative
East Hertfordshire	22·89	25·88	13·1	56	64	Conservative
Hertsmere	30·88	31·06	0·6	87	88	Conservative
North Hertfordshire	23·69	28·73	21·3	60	73	Conservative
St. Albans	19·00	26·52	39·6	54	75	None
Stevenage	41·30	41·30	0·0	101	101	Labour
Three Rivers	28·70	28·93	0·8	88	88	Liberal
Watford	30·86	30·86	0·0	74	74	Labour
Welwyn Hatfield	35·90	38·45	7·1	95	102	Labour

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1 April 1988
Humberside						
Beverley	26·68	29·68	11·2	55	61	Conservative
Boothferry	29·70	33·83	13·9	40	45	None
Cleethorpes	32·81	35·77	9·0	52	57	None
Glanford	24·84	25·00	0·6	40	40	Conservative
Great Grimsby	26·00	29·00	11·5	39	44	Labour
Holderness	20·96	26·21	25·0	34	42	Independent
Kingston-upon-Hull	56·61	47·00	−17·0	71	59	Labour
East Yorkshire	37·00	46·01	24·4	52	64	Conservative
Scunthorpe	42·50	45·00	5·9	68	72	Labour
Isle of Wight						
Medina	26·24	27·26	3·9	45	47	Conservative
South Wight	33·50	34·93	4·3	62	64	Conservative
Kent						
Ashford	23·53	24·74	5·1	47	49	Conservative
Canterbury	26·37	28·69	8·8	49	53	Conservative
Dartford	25·21	25·48	1·1	46	46	Conservative
Dover	19·98	25·18	26·0	34	42	Conservative
Gillingham	4·89	6·96	42·3	10	14	Conservative
Gravesham	24·83	26·26	5·8	49	51	Conservative
Maidstone	21·21	21·51	1·4	42	42	None
Rochester on Medway	10·21	10·24	0·3	19	19	Conservative
Sevenoaks	25·71	29·05	13·0	54	62	Conservative
Shepway	28·03	37·28	33·0	57	75	None
Swale	27·72	29·15	5·2	42	44	None
Thanet	29·85	32·79	9·8	56	61	None
Tonbridge and Malling	28·75	31·86	10·8	55	61	Conservative
Tonbridge Wells	22·24	26·75	20·3	44	52	Conservative
Lancashire						
Blackburn	49·04	47·04	−4·1	59	57	Labour
Blackpool	36·00	38·50	6·9	62	66	None
Burnley	63·04	63·04	0·0	64	64	Labour
Chorley	28·61	30·05	5·0	47	49	None
Fylde	28·40	29·68	4·5	57	60	Conservative
Hyndburn	43·15	43·90	1·7	48	49	Labour
Lancaster	25·00	27·00	8·0	39	42	None
Pendle	47·00	51·50	9·6	48	53	Liberal
Preston	38·06	45·07	18·4	57	67	Labour
Ribble Valley	30·55	32·74	7·2	52	55	Conservative
Rossendale	49·64	54·23	9·2	60	65	Labour
South Ribble	26·17	29·15	11·4	42	47	Conservative
West Lancashire	28·53	28·59	0·2	57	58	Conservative
Wyre	24·23	25·02	3·3	43	45	Conservative
Leicestershire						
Blaby	20·13	19·27	−4·3	43	41	Conservative
Charnwood	18·72	18·23	−2·6	40	39	Conservative
Harborough	26·70	28·16	5·5	59	62	None
Hinckley and Bosworth	16·33	18·89	15·7	32	37	Conservative
Leicester	47·75	52·30	9·5	74	81	Labour
Melton	4·13	5·83	41·2	9	12	Conservative
North West Leicester	33·60	35·72	6·3	61	65	None
Oadby and Wigston	20·50	21·50	4·9	46	48	Conservative
Rutland	19·68	19·94	1·3	44	44	None
Lincolnshire						
Boston	19·50	22·00	12·8	32	36	None
East Lindsey	23·78	28·14	18·3	37	44	Independent
Lincoln	27·00	31·00	14·8	40	46	Labour
North Kesteven	25·12	26·75	6·5	43	46	None
South Holland	25·66	27·39	6·7	42	45	Independent
South Kesteven	18·38	18·73	1·9	33	33	Conservative
West Lindsey	29·63	31·74	7·1	47	51	Liberal
Norfolk						
Breckland	17·68	20·59	16·5	31	36	Conservative
Broadland	18·20	21·02	15·5	37	43	Conservative
Great Yarmouth	29·31	30·46	3·9	47	49	None
North Norfolk	16·86	18·49	9·7	29	32	Independent

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1 April 1988
Norwich	43·70	45·50	4·1	75	78	Labour
South Norfolk	18·52	22·23	20·0	37	45	Conservative
Kings Lynn/West Norfolk	20·37	22·20	9·0	33	36	Conservative
Northamptonshire						
Corby	25·50	25·50	0·0	47	47	Labour
Daventry	25·61	25·61	0·0	57	57	Conservative
East Northampton	9·82	12·19	24·1	17	21	Conservative
Kettering	22·75	24·60	8·1	40	43	None
Northampton	29·89	34·62	15·8	60	69	Conservative
South Northampton	11·13	12·95	16·4	25	29	Conservative
Wellingborough	18·80	19·00	1·1	34	34	Conservative
Northumberland						
Alnwick	19·44	23·78	22·3	29	36	None
Berwick-upon-Tweed	20·72	24·23	16·9	28	33	None
Blyth Valley	49·25	54·00	9·6	75	83	Liberal
Castle Morpeth	29·17	33·54	15·0	59	67	None
Tynedale	25·35	27·39	8·0	39	43	None
Wansbeck	54·00	58·00	7·4	71	76	Labour
North Yorkshire						
Craven	22·66	25·05	10·5	32	35	None
Hambleton	21·07	25·43	20·7	38	45	None
Harrogate	37·57	40·14	6·8	68	73	Conservative
Richmondshire	24·46	27·71	13·3	43	48	Independent
Ryedale	20·92	22·51	7·6	32	35	Independent
Scarborough	29·57	31·82	7·6	42	46	None
Selby	30·08	31·22	3·8	46	48	Conservative
York	13·50	14·80	9·6	18	20	Labour
Nottinghamshire						
Ashfield	30·48	33·17	8·8	42	45	Labour
Bassetlaw	39·72	43·24	8·9	59	64	Labour
Broxtowe	23·69	25·03	5·7	41	44	Conservative
Gedling	24·10	27·23	13·0	44	50	Conservative
Mansfield	31·00	36·00	16·1	46	53	Labour
Newark and Sherwood	25·33	31·27	23·5	40	49	None
Nottingham	29·00	29·00	0·0	46	46	Conservative
Rushcliffe	27·42	27·79	1·3	56	57	Conservative
Oxfordshire						
Cherwell	11·38	11·88	4·4	25	26	Conservative
Oxford	22·10	41·60	88·2	52	98	Labour
South Oxfordshire	16·11	16·91	5·0	39	41	Conservative
Vale of White Horse	8·99	9·21	2·4	21	22	Conservative
West Oxfordshire	16·14	16·66	3·2	35	36	Conservative
Shropshire						
Bridgnorth	17·58	18·56	5·6	36	38	Independent
North Shropshire	19·39	24·52	26·5	34	43	Independent
Oswestry	24·47	30·49	24·6	37	46	None
Shrewsbury and Atcham	24·02	26·25	9·3	45	50	None
South Shropshire	17·22	19·37	12·5	27	30	Independent
The Wrekin	34·92	40·23	15·2	63	73	Labour
Somerset						
Mendip	17·81	19·94	12·0	33	36	None
Sedgemoor	22·85	22·90	0·2	43	43	Conservative
Taunton Deane	18·20	18·96	4·2	33	34	Conservative
West Somerset	18·11	21·62	19·4	32	38	Independent
South Somerset	18·49	24·23	31·0	33	43	Liberal
Staffordshire						
Cannock Chase	29·20	29·89	2·4	53	55	Labour
East Staffordshire	22·48	23·16	3·0	40	41	None
Lichfield	21·00	22·59	7·6	51	54	Conservative
Newcastle Under Lyme	28·69	30·28	5·5	51	53	Labour
South Staffordshire	19·41	20·75	6·9	47	50	Conservative
Stafford	16·57	20·17	21·7	34	42	None
Staffs. Moorlands	24·45	29·97	22·6	44	54	Conservative
Stoke-on-Trent	28·00	29·00	3·6	43	44	Labour
Tamworth	19·00	19·00	0·0	38	38	Conservative

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament	Political control at 1 April 1988
Suffolk						
Babergh	21·75	23·01	5·8	43	46	None
Forest Heath	16·60	19·50	17·5	30	35	Conservative
Ipswich	36·90	40·50	9·8	69	76	Labour
Mid Suffolk	23·49	26·16	11·4	44	49	Conservative
St. Edmundsbury	16·13	18·71	16·0	31	36	Conservative
Suffolk Coastal	26·31	36·60	39·1	56	78	Conservative
Waveney	23·45	25·27	7·8	41	44	None
Surrey						
Elmbridge	24·82	25·44	2·5	83	85	None
Epsom and Ewell	30·60	33·90	10·8	96	107	Independent
Guildford	20·61	20·61	0·0	56	56	Conservative
Mole Valley	21·51	22·85	6·2	57	61	None
Reigate and Banstead	27·11	29·07	7·2	75	80	Conservative
Runnymede	19·90	17·00	−14·6	51	43	Conservative
Spelthorne	15·50	4·20	−72·9	39	11	Conservative
Surrey Heath	18·73	20·71	10·6	58	64	Conservative
Tandridge	16·82	17·57	4·5	44	46	Conservative
Waverley	24·32	26·61	9·4	70	76	Conservative
Woking	26·00	29·00	11·5	68	76	None
Warwickshire						
North Warwickshire	44·28	46·32	4·6	89	93	Labour
Nuneaton & Bedworth	40·70	44·10	8·4	82	88	Labour
Rugby	25·89	26·29	1·5	56	57	Conservative
Stratford-on-Avon	21·45	21·08	−1·7	57	56	Conservative
Warwick	23·42	25·16	7·4	60	64	Conservative
West Sussex						
Adur	43·87	47·29	7·8	89	96	Liberal
Arun	24·40	26·46	8·4	53	58	Conservative
Chichester	18·83	20·14	7·0	42	45	Conservative
Crawley	42·75	48·00	12·3	83	93	Labour
Horsham	20·97	22·86	9·0	47	51	Conservative
Mid Sussex	28·15	33·11	17·6	69	81	Conservative
Worthing	22·50	22·50	0·0	49	49	Conservative
Wiltshire						
Kennet	19·21	20·63	7·4	36	39	Independent
North Wiltshire	26·23	33·03	25·9	44	56	Conservative
Salisbury	11·37	12·99	14·2	23	27	Conservative
Thamesdown	55·17	51·10	−7·4	88	82	Labour
West Wiltshire	18·23	25·78	41·4	31	44	Conservative

Local Rates and Precepts 1987-88—1988-89

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament
Metropolitan Police PA	15·75	16.87	7·1	n/a	n/a
Greater Manchester PA	15·65	15·38	−1·7	27	26
Merseyside PA	22·64	19·30	−14·8	42	36
South Yorkshire PA	16·00	15·59	−2·6	21	21
Northumbria PA	14·20	14·40	1·4	21	21
West Midlands PA	12·32	14·11	14·5	26	30
West Yorkshire PA	18·20	15·72	−13·6	24	21
London Fire Authority	8·07	8·07	0·0	23	23
Greater Manchester Fire Authority	9·75	10·45	7·2	17	18
Merseyside Fire Authority	6·80	8·39	23·4	13	16
South Yorkshire Fire Authority	10·26	11·21	9·3	14	15
Tyne and Wear Fire Authority	10·54	11·04	4·7	15	16
West Midlands Fire Authority	6·62	7·48	13·0	14	16
West Yorkshire Fire Authority	11·59	13·41	15·7	15	18
Greater Manchester PTA	12·96	15·58	20·2	22	27

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate or precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament
Merseyside PTA	28·48	26·50	−7·0	53	49
South Yorkshire PTA	34·28	30·35	−11·5	46	41
Tyne and Wear PTA	14·51	9·58	−34·0	21	14
West Midlands PTA	7·81	10·31	32·0	16	22
West Yorkshire PTA	23.78	24·82	4·4	31	33

Local rates and precepts 1987-88 to 1988-89

	Local rate or precept 1987-88 (p)	Local rate of precept 1988-89 (p)	Percentage change	Local rate or precept 1987-88 £ per hereditament	Local rate or precept 1988-89 £ per hereditament
Shire Counties					
All	200·0	223·0	11·5	396	411
Conservative	183·4	203·0	10·7	391	433
Labour	231·8	256·5	10·6	381	421
Other	203·7	228·5	12·2	401	450
Inner London (excluding City)					
All	78·9	79·5	0·8	240	242
Conservative	41·3	41·8	1·1	176	178
Labour (excluding rate limited)	98·4	107·5	9·2	271	296
Rate limited	117·3	116·1	−1·0	298	295
Outer London					
All	174·9	180·7	3·3	481	497
Conservative	142·6	158·5	11·1	418	465
Labour (excluding rate limited)	211·8	231·5	9·3	521	570
Rate limited	243·6	189·0	−22·4	615	477
Other	164·2	178·3	8·6	452	491
Shire Districts					
All	26·0	28·2	8·1	52	56
Conservative	21·2	22·9	8·0	46	50
Labour (excluding rate limited)	35·6	39·5	10·9	61	67
Rate limited	53·0	46·1	−13·0	89	77
Other	24·6	27·0	9·7	47	51
Metropolitan Districts					
All	232·7	245·0	5·3	391	412
Conservative	169·9	170·7	0·4	465	467
Labour (excluding rate limited)	229·3	246·1	7·3	368	395
Rate limited	292·1	275·9	−5·5	477	450
Other	212·3	230·2	8·4	399	432

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in descending order for each English authority on the basis of the percentage change in their rate or precept from 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing in each case the political control of the authority at the time of setting the later rate or precept.

Mr. Chope: The local rate for a district or borough is made up from the rate charged by the district itself together with the average of parish precepts and special district expenses and precepts charged by certain other specialised bodies such as waste disposal authorities. It does not include the precepts charged by higher tier authorities, for example county councils in the shires, police, fire and civil defence and transport authorities in metropolitan areas and London, and the Inner London Education Authority.

The table sets out the available information for each English authority:

Change in local rate or precept 1987-88 to 1988-89

	Percentage change	Political control at 1 April 1988
Oxford	88·2	Labour
Easington	53·8	Labour
Gillingham	42·3	Conservative
West Wiltshire	41·4	Conservative
Melton	41·2	Conservative
St. Albans	39·4	No overall control
Suffolk Coastal	39·1	Conservative
Chelmsford	36·1	Liberal
Brighton	33·3	Labour
Shepway	33·0	No overall control
West Midlands PTA	32·0	—
Wandsworth	31·7	Conservative
South Somerset	31·0	Liberal
Wokingham	29·4	Conservative
Bath	28·6	No overall control
Cambridge	27·0	No overall control
North Shropshire	26·5	Independent
Dover	26·0	Conservative
North Wiltshire	25·9	Conservative
Holderness	25·0	Independent

	Percentage change	*Political control at 1 April 1988*
North Dorset	24·7	Independent
Oswestry	24·6	No overall control
East Yorkshire	24·4	Conservative
East Northampton	24·1	Conservative
Newark and Sherwood	23·5	No overall control
Merseyside Fire	23·4	—
Stockton on Tees	23·2	Labour
West Devon	22·7	Independent
Staffordshire Moorlands	22·6	Conservative
Alnwick	22·3	No overall control
Caradon	21·8	Independent
Reading	21·7	Labour
Havant	21·7	Conservative
Stafford	21·7	No overall control
South Buckinghamshire	21·4	Conservative
North Hertfordshire	21·3	Conservative
Stroud	20·7	No overall control
Hambleton	20·7	No overall control
Derwentside	20·6	Labour
Enfield	20·5	Conservative
New Forest	20·4	Conservative
Humberside	20·3	No overall control
Tunbridge Wells	20·3	Conservative
South Manchester PTA	20·2	—
South Norfolk	20·0	Conservative
West Somerset	19·4	Independent
Basingstoke and Deane	18·8	Conservative
East Dorset	18·6	Conservative
Lancashire	18·5	No overall control
Preston	18·4	Labour
East Lindsey	18·3	Independent
Calderdale	18·1	No overall control
Essex	17·8	No overall control
North East Derbyshire	17·8	Labour
Mid Sussex	17·6	Conservative
Thurrock	17·5	Labour
Forest Heath	17·5	Conservative
Braintree	17·4	No overall control
Kerrier	17·1	No overall control
Hertfordshire	16·9	No overall control
Berwick-upon-Tweed	16·9	No overall control
East Hampshire	16·6	Conservative
Barrow in Furness	16·5	Labour
Breckland	16·5	Conservative
Erewash	16·4	Conservative
South Norhampton	16·4	Conservative
Plymouth	16·2	Conservative
Mansfield	16·1	Labour
St. Edmundsbury	16·0	Conservative
Warwickshire	15·9	No overall control
Northampton	15·8	Conservative
West Dorset	15·7	Independent
Hinkley and Bosworth	15·7	Conservative
West Yorkshire Fire	15·7	—
Barnet	15·6	Conservative
Broadland	15·5	Conservative
The Wrekin	15·2	Labour
Northamptonshire	15·1	Conservative
Bromsgrove	15·1	Conservative
Durham	15·0	Labour
Bristol	15·0	Labour
Castle Morpeth	15·0	No overall control
Colchester	14·9	No overall control
Rochford	14·9	Conservative
Lincoln	14·8	Labour
Northumberland[1]	14·6	No overall control
Woodspring	14·5	Conservative
West Midlands P.A.	14·5	—
East Sussex	14·1	Conservative
Carrick	14·1	No overall control
Lincolnshire	14·0	Conservative
Derbyshire Dales	13·9	Conservative
Boothferry	13·9	No overall control
Salisbury	13·9	Conservative
Kirklees	13·8	No overall control
Teignbridge	13·7	No overall control

	Percentage change	*Political control at 1 April 1988*
Islington	13·6	Labour
Mid Devon	13·6	Independent
Wyre Forest	13·6	No overall control
Derbyshire	13·5	Labour
Bexley	13·4	Conservative
Richmondshire	13·3	Independent
East Hertfordshire	13·1	Conservative
Sevenoaks	13·0	Conservative
Gedling	13·0	Conservative
West Midlands Fire	13·0	—
Cornwall	12·9	No overall control
Penwith	12·9	No overall control
Boston	12·8	No overall control
Kent	12·5	Conservative
Greenwich	12·5	Labour
South Bedfordshire	12·5	Conservative
North Cornwall	12·5	Independent
South Shropshire	12·5	Independent
Crawley	12·3	Labour
Wakefield	12·2	Labour
Hart	12·2	No overall control
Sheffield	12·1	Labour
Mendip	12·0	No overall control
Cleveland	11·9	Labour
Gloucestershire	11·9	No overall control
North Yorkshire	11·9	Conservative
Wear Valley	11·8	Labour
Somerset	11·7	No overall control
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	11·7	No overall control
Tower Hamlets	11·6	Liberal
Newham	11·6	Labour
Great Grimsby	11·5	Labour
Woking	11·5	No overall control
Newbury	11·4	Conservative
South Ribble	11·4	Conservative
Mid Suffolk	11·4	Conservative
Devon	11·3	No overall control
North Devon	11·2	No overall control
Beverley	11·2	Conservative
Fenland	11·1	Conservative
Hartlepool	11·1	Labour
Leicestershire	11·0	No overall control
Bradford	11·0	Labour
Merton	10·8	Conservative
Warrington	10·8	Labour
Tunbridge and Malling	10·8	Conservative
Epsom and Ewell	10·8	Independent
Brent	10·7	Labour
Richmond-upon-Thames	10·7	Liberal
Surrey	10·5	Conservative
Kingston-upon-Thames	10·5	Conservative
Craven	10·5	No overall control
Surrey Heath	10·5	Conservative
Crewe and Nantwich	10·3	No overall control
Oldham	10·1	Labour
Trafford	10·1	No overall control
Durham	10·1	Labour
Cheshire	10·0	No overall control
Norfolk	10·0	Conservative
Gateshead	10·0	Labour
Hereford and Worcester	9·8	Conservative
Vale Royal	9·8	No overall control
Thanet	9·8	No overall control
Ipswich	9·8	Labour
Isle of Wight	9·7	Liberal
Bulsover	9·7	Labour
Darlington	9·7	No overall control
Teesdale	9·7	Independent
Test Valley	9·7	Conservative
North Norfolk	9·7	Independent
Sutton	9·6	Liberal
Pendle	9·6	Liberal
Blyth Valley	9·6	Liberal
York	9·6	Labour
Wigan	9·5	Labour
Northavon	9·5	Conservative

	Percentage change	Political control at 1 April 1988
Sedgefield	9·5	Labour
Leicester	9·5	Labour
Leominster	9·4	Independent
Waverley	9·4	Conservative
Oxfordshire	9·3	No overall control
Hackney	9·3	Labour
Gosport	9·3	Conservative
Shrewsbury and Atcham	9·3	No overall control
South Yorkshire Fire	9·3	—
Buckinghamshire	9·2	Conservative
Rossendale	9·2	Labour
West Sussex	9·1	Conservative
North Tyneside	9·0	Labour
Cleethorpes	9·0	No overall control
Kings Lynn/West Norfolk	9·0	Conservative
Horsham	9·0	Conservative
Barnsley	8·9	Labour
Bassetlaw	8·9	Labour
Hampshire	8·8	No overall control
Peterborough	8·8	No overall control
Stockport	8·8	No overall control
Canterbury	8·8	Conservative
Ashfield	8·8	Labour
Shropshire	8·7	No overall control
Salford	8·6	Labour
Berkshire	8·5	Conservative
South Tyneside	8·5	Labour
Harrow	8·5	Conservative
Nuneaton and Bedworth	8·4	Labour
Arun	8·4	Conservative
Staffordshire	8·3	Labour
Doncaster	8·3	Labour
Wansdyke	8·1	Conservative
Kettering	8·1	No overall control
Coventry	8·0	Labour
Leeds	8·0	Labour
Croydon	8·0	Conservative
Havering	8·0	No overall control
South Derbyshire	8·0	Labour
Lancaster	8·0	No overall control
Tynedale	8·0	No overall control
Avon	7·9	No overall control
Suffolk	7·9	Conservative
Tameside	7·9	Labour
Wiltshire	7·8	No overall control
Exeter	7·8	No overall control
South Hams	7·8	Conservative
Waveney	7·8	No overall control
Adur	7·8	Liberal
Fareham	7·7	No overall control
Rotherham	7·6	Labour
Christchurch	7·6	Conservative
Ryedale	7·6	Independent
Scarborough	7·6	No overall control
Lichfield	7·6	Conservative
Dorset	7·4	Conservative
Bury	7·4	Labour
Rochdale	7·4	Labour
Sefton	7·4	No overall control
Hillingdon	7·4	No overall control
Redditch	7·4	Labour
Wansbeck	7·4	Labour
Reigate and Banstead	7·4	Conservative
Warwick	7·4	Conservative
Kennet	7·4	Independent
Bromley	7·3	Conservative
Hounslow	7·3	Labour
Chiltern	7·3	Conservative
Chester le Street	7·3	Labour
Nottinghamshire	7·2	Labour
Wirral	7·2	No overall control
Ribble Valley	7·2	Conservative
Greater Manchester Fire	7·2	—
Welwyn Hatfield	7·1	Labour
West Lindsey	7·1	Liberal
Metropolitan Police P.A.	7·1	—
Chichester	7·0	Conservative
Blackpool	6·9	No overall control
South Staffordshire	6·9	Conservative
Torbay	6·8	Conservative
Purbeck	6·0	No overall control
Harrogate	6·8	Conservative
Lewes	6·7	Conservative
South Holland	6·7	Independent
Wychavon	6·6	Conservative
North Kesteven	6·5	No overall control
Bolton	6·3	Labour
Wealden	6·3	Conservative
Harlow	6·3	Labour
North West Leicester	6·3	No overall control
Barking and Dagenham	6·2	Labour
High Peak	6·2	No overall control
Mole Valley	6·2	No overall control
Bedfordshire	6·1	No overall control
Cotswold	6·1	Independent
Eden	6·0	Independent
Chester	5·9	No overall control
Scunthorpe	5·9	Labour
Eastleigh	5·8	No overall control
Gravesham	5·8	Conservative
Babergh	5·8	No overall control
St. Helens	5·7	Labour
Broxtowe	5·7	Conservative
Poole	5·6	Conservative
Castle Point	5·6	Conservative
Gloucester	5·6	Conservative
Bridgnorth	5·6	Independent
Cumbria	5·5	No overall control
Winchester	5·5	No overall control
Harborough	5·5	No overall control
Newcastle under Lyme	5·5	Labour
Mid Bedfordshire	5·4	Conservative
Malvern Hills	5·3	No overall control
Hammersmith and Fulham	5·2	Labour
Congleton	5·2	No overall control
Swale	5·2	No overall control
Restormel	5·1	No overall control
Dacorum	5·1	Conservative
Ashford	5·1	Conservative
Sandwell	5·0	Labour
Ellesmere Port and Neston	5·0	Labour
Halton	5·0	Labour
Epping Forest	5·0	Conservative
Cheltenham	5·0	No overall control
Chorley	5·0	No overall control
South Oxfordshire	5·0	Conservative
Cambridgeshire	4·9	No overall control
Oadby and Wigston	4·9	Conservative
Hastings	4·8	No overall control
Walsall	4·7	No overall control
Macclesfield	4·7	Conservative
Tyne and Wear Fire	4·7	—
Huntingdonshire	4·6	Conservative
North Warwickshire	4·6	Labour
Fylde	4·5	Conservative
Tandridge	4·5	Conservative
Cherwell	4·4	Conservative
West Yorkshire PTA	4·4	—
South Wight	4·3	Conservative
Taunton Deane	4·2	Conservative
City of London	4·1	Independent
Worcester	4·1	Labour
Norwich	4·1	Labour
Southampton	4·0	No overall control
Milton Keynes	3·9	No overall control
Medina	3·9	Conservative
Great Yarmouth	3·9	No overall control
Sunderland	3·8	Labour
Selby	3·8	Conservative
Knowsley	3·7	Labour
Lewisham	3·7	Labour
Stoke-on-Trent	3·6	Labour

	Percentage change	*Political control at 1 April 1988*
Wolverhampton	3·5	No overall control
Portsmouth	3·4	Conservative
Wyre	3·3	Conservative
Birmingham	3·2	Labour
West Oxfordshire	3·2	Conservative
Isles of Scilly	3·1	Independent
Bracknell	3·0	Conservative
Wycombe	3·0	Conservative
East Staffordshire	3·0	No overall control
Rother	2·8	Conservative
I.L.E.A.	2·6	Labour
Uttlesford	2·5	Conservative
Elmbridge	2·5	No overall control
South Herefordshire	2·4	Independent
Vale of White Horse	2·4	Conservative
Cannock Chase	2·4	Labour
Forest of Dean	2·1	No overall control
Dudley	1·9	Labour
South Kesteven	1·9	Conservative
South Cambridgeshire	1·7	Independent
Tewkesbury	1·7	No overall control
Hyndburn	1·7	Labour
Aylesbury Vale	1·6	Conservative
East Devon	1·5	Conservative
Rugby	1·5	Conservative
Maidstone	1·4	No overall control
Northumbria P.A.	1·4	—
Rutland	1·3	No overall control
Rushcliffe	1·3	Conservative
Liverpool	1·2	Labour
Dartford	1·1	Conservative
Wellingborough	1·1	Conservative
Torridge	1·0	Independent
North Bedfordshire	0·9	Conservative
Three Rivers	0·8	Liberal
Kingswood	0·7	Conservative
South Lakeland	0·7	No overall control
Copeland	0·6	Labour
Chesterfield	0·6	Labour
Hertsmere	0·6	Conservative
Glanford	0·6	Conservative
Redbridge	0·5	Conservative
Tendring	0·5	Conservative
Solihull	0·4	Conservative
Carlisle	0·3	Labour
Rochester on Medway	0·3	Conservative
Slough	0·2	Labour
Windsor and Maidenhead	0·2	Conservative
West Lancashire	0·2	Conservative
Sedgemoor	0·2	Conservative
Allerdale	0·0	No overall control
Bournemouth	0·0	Conservative
Weymouth and Portland	0·0	No overall control
Eastbourne	0·0	Liberal
Southend on Sea	0·0	No overall control
Broxbourne	0·0	Conservative
Stevenage	0·0	Labour
Watford	0·0	Labour
Burnley	0·0	Labour
Corby	0·0	Labour
Daventry	0·0	Conservative
Nottingham	0·0	Conservative
Tamworth	0·0	Conservative
Guildford	0·0	Conservative
Worthing	0·0	Conservative
London Fire Authority	0·0	—
Westminster	−0·4	Conservative
East Cambridgeshire	−0·9	Independent
Stratford-on-Avon	−1·7	Conservative
Greater Manchester P.A.	−1·7	—
Camden	−2·6	Labour
Charnwood	−2·6	Conservative
South Yorkshire P.A.	−2·6	—
Luton	−3·6	Conservative
Rushmoor	−3·8	Conservative
Blackburn	−4·1	Labour
Blary	−4·3	Conservative
Brentwood	−5·0	Conservative
Derby	−5·7	Labour
Basildon	−6·0	No overall control
Maldon	−6·0	No overall control
Merseyside PTA	−7·0	—
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	−7·2	Labour
Thamesdown	−7·4	Labour
Amber Valley	−8·6	No overall control
Southwark	−9·3	Labour
Manchester	−9·7	Labour
Haringey	−9·9	Labour
South Yorkshire PTA	−11·5	—
West Yorkshire P.A.	−13·6	—
Runnymede	−14·6	Conservative
Merseyside P.A.	−14·8	—
Kingston-upon-Hull	−17·0	Labour
Lambeth	−17·9	Labour
Ealing	−24·5	Labour
Kensington and Chelsea	−26·4	Conservative
Middlebrough	−27·0	Labour
Waltham Forest	−31·3	Labour
Hereford	−33·6	Liberal
Tyne and Wear PTA	−34·0	—
Spelthorne	−72·9	Conservative

[1] Excluding Northumbria Police Authority precept.

Note: Hove (Conservative) increased its local rate from 0p to 4·9p, but this can not be expressed as a percentage.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 May 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Channel Islands

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the right of the individual petition has yet been ratified in accordance with article 63 of the convention with regard to the first protocol of the European convention on human rights for *(a)* the Bailiwick of Guernsey, *(b)* the Bailiwick of Jersey and *(c)* the Isle of Man; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The right of individual petition in accordance with article 25 of the European convention on human rights was renewed by Guernsey and Jersey for a period of five years with effect from January 1986. The first protocol to the convention was extended to Guernsey and Jersey in February 1988.

The Isle of Man Government decided, in 1976, not to renew the right of individual petition and reaffirmed this decision on subsequent occasions. They are currently considering whether to have the first protocol to the convention extended to the island.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding negotiations between Her Majesty's Government and the authorities in *(a)* Jersey and *(b)* Guernsey, concerning procedures relating to presentation of petitions from these islands and certain orders of the Privy Council of 1679; and if he will seek assurances that the procedure with regard to the registration of Acts of Parliament orders or letters of the Privy Council in those islands will not be changed without prior approval of Parliament.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Informal discussions on clarifying the procedures for appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council have taken place with the Attorneys-General of Jersey and Guernsey. Any changes relating to the registration of Acts of Parliament, Orders or letters of the Privy Council would be matters requiring the approval of Her Majesty The Queen in Council.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the judges rules remain applicable in *(a)* the Channel Islands and *(b)* the Isle of Man where the Police and Criminal Evidence Act does not apply; whether the judges of the courts in those islands are empowered to alter or amend the judges rules; and what proposals there are to extend the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to those islands.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The judges rules, which have been replaced by the code of practice issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, do not apply in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man and the courts in those islands have no power to amend or alter these rules. Principles similar to those laid down in the code of practice have been adopted in the islands. There is no provision whereby the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 could be extended to the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to whether legislation has yet been introduced in *(a)* the Channel Islands and *(b)* the Isle of Man to prevent discrimination on the basis of racial or ethnic origin or sex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. But I have no doubt that the island authorities will be prepared to consider such legislation if circumstances required it.

Gillow *v.* United Kingdom

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the financial costs incurred by the United Kingdom Government in the case of Gillow *v.* United Kingdom before the European Commission and Court of Human Rights; what part of those costs shall be borne by the island of Guernsey; and what measures have been taken by Her Majesty's Government as high contraction party to the convention for the island of Guernsey, to secure the rights and freedoms protected by the convention in that island in relation to the future application of the Housing Control of Occupation (Guernsey) Laws.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The sum of £12,869, agreed as compensation and costs to the plaintiff, has been paid by the Bailiwick of Guernsey. The Bailiwick will also be asked to reimburse the United Kingdom for costs to cover the employment of counsel at Strasbourg when these have been determined. Her Majesty's Government are satisfied that Guernsey will take full cognisance of its obligations under the convention in the application of the Housing Control of Occupation (Guernsey) laws.

British Telecom (Telephone Logs)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with British Telecom to ensure that logs of telephone calls are in a form that can easily be used, if necessary, by the police and security services; whether he is satisfied with the established procedures for allowing access to such logs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: I am not aware of problems arising in this area.

PRIME MINISTER

Kilmarnock

Q90. **Mr McKelvey:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Kilmarnock.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Ramsbottom

Q107. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Ramsbottom.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Prime Minister of Iceland

Q129. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet the Prime Minister of Iceland.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to meet the Prime Minister of Iceland in the near future.

Cyprus

Q132. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions she had during her recent meeting with the President of Cyprus as to the future of British bases in Cyprus; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is not my normal practice to give details of such discussions. President Vassiliou and I dealt with a number of matters of interest to both countries.

Engagements

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Hungary.

SCOTLAND

Free School Meals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of children in each local education authority who received free school meals *(a)* because their parents were on family income supplement and *(b)* at the discretion of the local education authority at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

NHS Nurses

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time nurses work in the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information, which is provisional and relates to 30 September 1987, is as follows:

Nursing staff in the NHS in Scotland

	Whole-time	*Part-time*
Qualified	26,756	14,183
In training	10,805	40
Unqualified	8,743	13,170
Total	46,304	27,393

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, further to his written answer on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *325*, he will clarify the circumstances in which health boards could be designated responsible persons for the purposes of the community charge; about whom the information will be requested; and what kinds of information health boards would be required to provide.

Mr. Lang: Under section 17(6) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 the responsible person who is required to supply information in respect of premises for community charge registration purposes is defined as the owner-occupier or tenant-occupier of the premises or, where there is no such person, the owner or any tenant who has a lease of 12 months or more. The Act also provides that any other person may be designated as a responsible person by the community charges registration officer. In the case, for example, of nurses' homes, it is therefore possible that health boards, or one of their officers, would be, or would be designated as, responsible persons. The responsible person is required to provide the information about persons solely or mainly resident on the premises requested in the inquiry form or the supplementary inquiry form prescribed in schedules 3 and 4 of the Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) Regulations 1988.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether any official publicity material in relation to the community charge, that either has been given to members of the public on request, or has appeared in the Scottish newspapers, informs future community charge payers that their name and address may be sold without their consent or knowledge;

(2) whether any official publicity material in relation to the community charge, that either has been given to members of the public on request, or has appeared in the Scottish newspapers, informs future community charge payers that their name and address on the register may be inspected by police, Inland Revenue, the Department of Health and Social Security and other organisations without their consent or knowledge.

Mr. Lang: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will ensure that any future official publicity material in relation to the community charge will inform future community charge payers that their name and address may be sold without their consent or knowledge, and that their name and address on the register may be inspected by police, Inland Revenue, the Department of Health and Social Security and other organisations without their consent or knowledge.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering whether any restriction should be put on the

availability for sale of the publicly available parts of the community charges register. It is made clear in the notice to be sent to registered persons informing them of their entry in the community charges register (schedule 1 to the Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) Regulations 1988) that the parts of the register showing names, addresses and collective community charge mulipliers applying to certain premises will be made publicly available. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider in due course whether any further publicity should be given to these points.

Laboratories

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the laboratories now operating in Scotland with their respective specialities and the number of *(a)* specialised, *(b)* auxiliary and *(c)* ancillary staff, at each establishment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In respect of the National Health Service information is not held centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information, including manpower, is contained in "Laboratory Statistics" published by Information and Statistics Division, Scottish Health Service Common Services Agency. The information relates to individual laboratories at each establishment, in the following groups: clinical chemistry, haematology, microbiology and pathology. Copies of the latest edition, for the year ending 31 March 1985, are held in the Library.

Retail Developments

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many retail developments are currently the subject of planning appeals before him; and what is *(a)* their total square footage, *(b)* the number with a square footage at or above 100,000 sq ft and *(c)* the total square footage of the appeals in *(b)*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is estimated that there are over 60 current appeals with a retail element of which about half are likely to have a floor area in excess of 100,000 sq ft.

Student Fees

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will announce the fees to be charged to students attending Scottish institutions other than universities in the academic year 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For the academic year 1988-89 my right hon. and learned Friend has prescribed the following fee levels for home students and for students from other European Community (EC) countries on full-time advanced courses in the central institutions and colleges of education (fees for 1987-88 are shown in brackets):

	£
Postgraduate courses	1,800 (1,730)
Undergraduate and equivalent courses	578 (556)

For non-advanced courses, the central institutions and colleges of education will be invited to set their own fees, by having regard to fees charged for comparable courses at local authority further education colleges.

Fees for home and other EC students on courses at local authority colleges are the responsibility of the local authorities. I understand that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has decided to recommend fees for such students as follows:

	£
Postgraduate courses	1,800 (1,760)
Advanced full-time courses	578 (556)
Non-advanced full-time courses	440 (360)

For overseas students the Government's policy is that students should pay fees that cover the cost of their education. Local authorities and institutions are free to determine the fees to be charged in accordance with that policy, and in the light of their own circumstances. I understand that COSLA has decided to recommend to local authorities the following fees for students at local authority colleges paying the overseas rate who began their courses on or after 1 September 1980:

	£
Advanced courses	3,890 (3,720)
Non-advanced courses	2,145 (2,055)

Bathing Waters

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the results for the 1987 season of monitoring the Scottish bathing waters identified under the European Community's bathing waters directive; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The monitoring results for 1987 are set out in summary form in the table. Nineteen out of 23 waters monitored met the directive's standards. My Department expects to publish shortly a full report on the quality of the bathing waters during the 1986 and 1987 seasons, and I shall make a further statement at that time.

Result table	
Nairn	Pass
Cullen	Pass
Fraserburgh	Pass
Aberdeen	Pass
Montrose	Pass
Arbroath	Pass
Carnoustie	Pass
St. Andrews	Pass
Kinghorn	Pass
Aberdour	Pass
Gullane	Pass
North Berwick	Pass
Yellowcraigs	Pass
Dunbar	Pass
Pease Bay	Pass
Sandyhills	Pass
Girvan	Fail
Turnberry	Fail
Ayr	Fail
Prestwick	Pass
Troon (South)	Pass
Irvine-Gailes	Fail
Saltcoats/Ardrossan	Pass

EMPLOYMENT

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost per trainee at an information technology education centre; and how long does the course last.

Mr. Nicholls: Information technology centres provide a range of training, most of it under YTS. In 1987-88 the annual cost to the Manpower Services Commission per YTS trainee was £4,224. As with all YTS schemes, information technology centres provide up to two years of vocational training for unemployed 16-year-olds and up to one year of training for unemployed 17-year-olds.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many filled places were there on the new job training scheme on 31 March.

Mr. Nicholls: At 25 March 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, 30,435 formerly unemployed people were participating in the new job training scheme.

Disposable Income

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the aggregate disposable income in 1979, showing the median, the lowest and highest deciles, and the lower and upper quartiles, for *(a)* all households in the United Kingdom and *(b)* Greater London, in an adjusted form on the current basis, as if the housing benefit scheme had applied at that date, as provided for 1983 in the answer in the *Official Report*, 22 July 1987, columns *211-12*.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to produce estimates from the 1979 family expenditure survey on the same basis as those provided for 1983 in the *Official Report*, 22 July 1987, columns *211-12*.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings have been purchased by each of the local housing authorities in Wales from the private housing sector in each of the past five years.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table:

Acquisition of Dwellings by Local Authorities 1983-87

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Aberconwy	1	3	4	0	2
Alyn and Deeside	15	2	12	3	2
Arfon	9	18	7	4	1
Blaenau Gwent	3	5	0	4	32
Brecknock	0	0	2	5	21
Cardiff	5	0	3	5	4
Carmarthen	0	0	5	12	7
Ceredigion	4	7	3	0	0
Colwyn	0	1	0	0	0
Cynon Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Delyn	0	0	1	0	1
Dinefwr	0	0	0	0	0
Dwyfor	5	0	0	4	9
Glyndwr	0	1	1	0	0
Islwyn	1	0	4	1	1
Llanelli	0	1	0	1	0
Lliw Valley	2	0	0	0	9
Meirionnydd	3	0	0	1	1
Merthyr Tydfil	0	4	0	62	1
Monmouth	0	0	5	12	19
Montgomeryshire	0	0	0	0	0
Neath	14	0	5	40	26
Newport	10	4	1	61	89
Ogwr	6	3	44	39	67
Port Talbot	0	7	0	0	0
Preseli	15	26	17	12	3
Radnor	0	0	0	2	4
Rhondda	0	0	0	0	1
Rhuddlan	0	0	1	0	0
Rhymney Valley	6	3	6	11	64
South Pembrokeshire	0	1	2	0	0
Swansea	7	2	1	3	9
Taff-Ely	3	0	0	15	3
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	2	5	7
Wrexham	0	0	0	0	1
Ynys Mon	4	0	0	0	0
Total	113	88	126	302	384

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide additional finance for Alyn and Deeside district council for housing repairs, maintenance and rehabilitation schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Alyn and Deeside district council receives an appropriate share of the capital allocation which we make to housing authorities, and resources are also made available towards the activities of the housing associations in the area. The authority has not bid against additional resources the Department has available for enveloping and block repair schemes.

Free School Meals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of children in each local education authority who received free school meals *(a)* because their parents were in receipt of family income supplement and *(b)* at the discretion of the local education authority, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In September 1987 an estimated 82,236 children received school meals because their parents were in receipt of supplementary benefit or family income support. But information about the numbers in each category is not available. A further 7,314 children received free school meals at the discretion of the local education authority.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of whole-time equivalent qualified nurses working in Wales in *(a)* hospital maternity units and *(b)* special care baby units;

(2) if he will list for each year since 1981 the number of whole-time equivalent qualified midwives working in Wales *(a)* in hospital maternity units, *(b)* in special care baby units, *(c)* in education and *(d)* as community midwives.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Information taken primarily from the NHS payroll is not sufficiently detailed to distinguish reliably between the occupational categories of nurses and midwives requested.

Tropical Woods

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice his Department is giving to local authorities and other institutional users of tropical woods in Wales about the use of wood from unsustainable sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry on 21 April, at column *534*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Attorney-General if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 26 April, *Official Report*, column 64 he will set out the criteria the Crown Prosecution Service uses in judging whether time occupied by earlier court proceedings has occasioned staleness of a significance sufficient for criminal proceedings not to be instituted.

The Attorney-General: Each case will be viewed in the light of its particular circumstances and of the considerations set out in paragraph 8, in particular, of the code for Crown prosecutors to which my previous answer referred.

The code for Crown prosecutors may be found in the annual report made by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Attorney-General. Copies of the director's first report were placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 13 August 1987. This was announced on 21 October 1987, at column *743*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the present pupil-teacher ratio for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1987 the pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in England were 21·9 and 15·6, respectively. Information for schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Polytechnics

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those colleges which have given a definite indication of their intention to apply to join the Polytechnics Central Funding Council sector by 30 April and whose full-time equivalent enrolment numbers for courses of advanced further education on 1 November 1985 did not exceed 55 per cent. of their total full-time equivalent enrolment numbers on that date.

Mr. Jackson: The following colleges have given a provisional indication of their wish that the Secretary of State should exercise the power conferred by clause 106(1) of the Education Reform Bill to incorporate them within the PCFC sector with effect from 1 April 1989, subject to the Bill's obtaining the Royal Assent:

Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education
Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology
Harrow College of Higher Education
Luton College of Higher Education

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will issue guidance on the way in which the governing bodies of further education colleges should be reformed so as to meet the requirements of clauses 132 and 133 of the Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am today issuing draft guidance which sets out how I would expect college governing bodies to be reformed and their instruments of government revised in order to meet the requirements of clauses 132 and 133 of the Education Reform Bill if it receives Royal Assent in its present form. The draft guidance is being issued now in order to inform discussion of the further education clauses during the remaining stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament, to help local education authorities, colleges and others to prepare for the reconstitution of governing bodies as envisaged by the Bill, and to give all concerned an early opportunity to comment. Draft guidance on the provisions I would expect to see contained in the planning and delegation schemes envisaged by clause 121 of the Bill was issued on 21 April.

Copies of the draft guidance have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and in the Vote Office. They are also being sent to local education authorities, further and higher education colleges, and a range of interested bodies, with a request for any comments by 22 July 1988.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Development Grant

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications were awaiting determination on 1 April for *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* RSFA in the Corby development area.

Mr. Atkins: The number of applications awaiting determination on 1 April 1988 for the Corby development area was:

	Number
(a) Regional Development Grant	245
(b) RSA	9

Consumer Protection

Dr. Reid: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received seeking new legislation to protect consumers; and how he intends to respond.

Mr. Butcher: Suggestions for new legislation to protect consumers are received from a wide group of organisations and individuals. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 4 February to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), which set out information on plans for new legislation for the protection of consumers.

Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps are being taken to extend the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]* to *(a)* the Channel Islands and *(b)* the Isle of Man: and what other measures are being taken to ensure that the intended purposes of this legislation are not avoided by persons or businesses in the United Kingdom, based in those island territories.

Mr. Butcher: Part I of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill contains provision under which it may be extended to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man by Order in Council. In accordance with normal practice it will be for the islands themselves to decide if and to what extent it should be so extended. The Isle of Man is understood to be considering introducing new legislation of its own on copyright, in parallel with the United Kingdom Bill, and in this event extension of the provisions of the Bill is unlikely to be appropriate.

Financial Services Act 1987

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions have taken place with the authorities of *(a)* the Channel Islands, and *(b)* the Isle of Man regarding the implementation of the Financial Services Act in those territories; and if he will make a statement on the nature of these discussions in respect of (i) investment businesses and (ii) other businesses.

Mr. Maude: Guernsey and the Isle of Man have been designated under section 130 of the Financial Services Act as having a law in relation to insurance companies which affords adequate protection to policyholders and potential policyholders. My Department has also had discussions with the authorities of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man regarding the possible designation of those territories under section 87 of the Financial Services Act in relation to collective investment schemes.

Businesses (Houghton and Washington)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what figures are available for the growth in the number of businesses in Houghton and Washington.

Mr. Atkins: Comprehensive information on the lines requested is not available. However, data collected on the setting up of new manufacturing firms employing more than 10 people show that 20 such firms have opened since January 1985 currently employing more than 1,600 people. The full employment implications of these openings, particularly the inward investment cases, have yet to fully work through. For example, excluded from this data is the forecast of an additional 2,400 jobs at Nissan to bring the total employment to 3,500 by 1992.

Manufacturing Investment (North-East)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the figures for manufacturing investment in the north-east for each year since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The available information is shown in the following table:

Net capital expenditure[1] in manufacturing industry in the North-East[2] at 1980 prices

Year	*Net capital expenditure £ million*
1979	600
1980	396
1981	254
1982	247
1983	247
1984	281
1985	350
1986	297

[1] Excluding leased assets.
[2] The North-East comprises Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.
Source: Annual Census of Production.

Technology Industries (North-East)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to encourage the growth of new technology industries in the north-east of England.

Mr. Atkins: Industry in the north-east will be greatly encouraged by the enterprise initiative, with major new initiatives covering design, marketing, quality, manufacturing technology, business planning, business information systems, exports, research and technology and business education backed up by investment and innovation grants for small firms, and regional selective assistance where clearly necessary to bring about good projects.

New and existing high technology firms and industries will also be encouraged by the work of other organisations in the region receiving support from DTI and from other Government Departments, including the Northern Development Company, English Estates North and the urban development corporations. Taken together with the priority given to new technology by the city action team and the task forces, and the work of others in the region involved in technology transfer and industry/education, this represents a strongly supportive environment and infrastructure for high technology industry to succeed in the north-east.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the increase for domestic product per capita in each of the regions of the United Kingdom since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Estimates of gross domestic product per capita in each of the regions of the United Kingdom were published in the November 1987 edition of *Economic Trends*, a copy of which is available in the House Library.

Increases in gross domestic product per capita between 1979 and 1986 are provided for the specified regions in the table:

Gross domestic product[1] per capita from 1979 to 1986[2]

	1979	*1986[2]*	*Increase £/head*	*Increase per cent.*
North	2,701	5,142	2,441	90
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,754	5,215	2,461	89
East Midlands	2,840	5,378	2,538	89
East Anglia	2,778	5,643	2,865	103

	1979	1986[2]	Increase £/head	Increase per cent.
South East	3,417	6,575	3,158	92
South West	2,749	5,380	2,631	96
West Midlands	2,828	5,069	2,241	79
North West	2,854	5,232	2,378	83
Wales	2,618	4,795	2,177	83
Scotland	2,829	5,234	2,405	85
Northern Ireland	2,316	3,889	1,573	68
United Kingdom[3]	2,964	5,597	2,633	89

[1] Gross domestic product at factor cost, current prices.
[2] 1986 figures are provisional.
[3] Excluding Continental Shelf.

Steel and Aluminium Forgings Industry

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of the steel and aluminium forgings industry in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Atkins: The figures are as follows. Separate figures are not available for aluminium forgings.

Deliveries of forgings

000's tonnes

	Steel forgings	Other forgings
1986	19·7	174·3
1987	23·3	223·2

Source: ISSB (steel forgings).
British Forgings Industry Association (other forgings).

Opportunity Japan Campaign

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his Department's Opportunity Japan campaign.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Opportunity Japan campaign is being mounted by senior British business men with the support of the Department of Trade and Industry and the British Overseas Trade Board. It will aim to heighten United Kingdom companies' awareness of the increasing opportunities offered by the strategically important Japanese market and will stress the arguments for tackling it now with the appropriate long-term commitment.

This message will be elaborated by His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, vice chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board, Cabinet Ministers and business men experienced in Japan at briefing meetings for targeted company chief executives. These will be held in June and July at venues throughout the country.

Scottish and Newcastle Brewery plc

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Scottish and Newcastle company has filed accounts and an annual return for the last financial year with Companies House.

Mr. Maude: Scottish and Newcastle Brewery plc filed accounts made up to 3 May 1987 with Companies House, Edinburgh, on 8 September 1987 and an annual return made up to 10 September 1987 on 22 October 1987.

These documents are available for inspection.

DEFENCE

Heanor Hospital, Derbyshire

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any representations regarding the status of Heanor hospital, Derbyshire, as a war memorial.

Mr. Freeman: I have recently received a letter from my hon. Friend about this and I will write to him shortly. No other representations have been received to date.

Israel

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military assistance has been given to Israel by the United Kingdom since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Military assistance for Israel has been limited since the imposition of arms sales restrictions in 1982. Israel continues to pay for some places on United Kingdom training courses. All requests for training and exchanges of information are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Gibraltar (Shootings)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his negotiations with the Gibraltar coroner on how three SAS men will give their evidence into the deaths of three IRA terrorists without revealing their identities at the inquest.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No discussions about arrangements for military personnel to give evidence to the inquest have yet taken place.

Chemical Warfare Establishments

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet made arrangements for the exchange of visits between the Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down and the Soviet chemical warfare facility at Shikhany.

Mr. Ian Stewart: An exchange of visits between the Chemical Defence Establishment (CDE) at Porton Down and the Soviet chemical warfare facility at Shikhany was originally suggested by the United Kingdom in 1986. At that time the Soviet Union had not yet acknowledged that it possessed chemical warfare (CW) stocks, but it did so in early 1987. It accepted the idea of an exchange of visits in principle towards the end of last year.

Arrangements have now been made for the Soviet Union to send an official team to visit Porton Down from 24 to 26 May, as the first part of the exchange of visits. In return, a United Kingdom team will visit Shikhany in July for an equivalent period. These visits are designed to improve confidence and understanding between Britain and the USSR in the context of the continuing negotiations of the conference on disarmament in Geneva for a comprehensive and global ban on chemical weapons, which is one of NATO's arms control priorities. They will involve the exchange of scientific, technical and military information on CW-related matters.

Since the United Kingdom abandoned its chemical weapons capability in the 1950s, the role of the CDE is

research into protective measures for United Kingdom armed forces for defensive purposes. The Soviet CW complex at Shikhany, on the other hand, is part of their substantial capability for the research, development and production of chemical weapons.

The programme at Porton Down will be designed to maximise the opportunities for the exchange of information and for building confidence between the two sides. In addition to the visit to CDE, it will include a tour of the other facilities and organisations at Porton Down, including the United Kingdom defence nuclear biological and chemical centre and the DHSS public health laboratory service centre for applied micro-biological research. At CDE the facilities to be visited will include research and trials units, and the recently constructed facility for the destruction of old CW agents. It is intended that the full range of CW-related issues should be discussed during the visit, including production, assessment of the CW hazard, storage, trials, detection, protection, monitoring, decontamination, medical countermeasures and disposal.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his departmental budget includes any sums earmarked for HIV testing of pregnant mothers.

Mr. Newton: No. However, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his announcement on 3 November 1987 about future spending plans for health and personal social services, the additional money for AIDS over £50 million was intended, among other things, to help develop preventive, counselling and diagnostic services. A copy of the announcement has been placed in the Library.

Staffing (Trent Region)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the staffing levels in each health authority within the Trent region for the last five years in the categories *(a)* ancillary posts, *(b)* nursing, *(c)* medical dental, *(d)* administration and clerical, and *(e)* other grades, including ambulance staff and technicians.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is shown in the tables.

NHS directly employed staff
Trent Regional Health Authority

Whole-time equivalents[1]

District health authorities	*Ancillary*	*Nursing*[2] *and midwifery*	*Medical*[3] *and dental*	*Administrative*[4] *and clerical*	*Others*[5]	*Total*
At 30 September 1982						
North Derbyshire	722	1,875	84	293	320	3,294
South Derbyshire	1,672	3,939	202	891	1,216	7,920
Leicestershire (T)	2,803	6,176	574	1,479	1,573	12,604
North Lincolnshire	1,103	2,272	123	515	794	4,807
South Lincolnshire	813	1,803	96	384	334	3,431
Bassetlaw	219	591	35	139	124	1,107
Central Nottinghamshire	1,113	2,019	99	440	489	4,160
Nottingham (T)	2,702	5,181	557	1,510	1,938	11,887
Barnsley	623	1,445	109	389	329	2,896
Doncaster	778	2,311	126	457	392	4,063
Rotherham	712	1,563	87	361	344	3,068
Sheffield (T)	3,183	6,092	629	1,507	1,554	12,964
RHA HQ and HQ units	122	90	*780	656	830	2,477
Regional total	16,564	35,354	*3,500	9,019	10,237	74,674
At 30 September 1983						
North Derbyshire	729	1,913	83	315	342	3,383
South Derbyshire	1,619	3,860	208	839	1,249	7,774
Leicestershire (T)	2,727	6,065	596	1,411	1,619	12,419
North Lincolnshire	1,052	2,260	110	537	800	4,759
South Lincolnshire	809	1,874	98	401	354	3,536
Bassetlaw	219	597	35	144	126	1,120
Central Nottinghamshire	1,116	2,038	101	435	501	4,191
Nottingham (T)	2,590	5,168	564	1,412	1,949	11,684
Barnsley	604	1,454	111	373	328	2,869
Doncaster	766	2,318	125	444	409	4,061
Rotherham	708	1,532	93	348	352	3,033
Sheffield (T)	3,101	6,068	649	1,431	1,573	12,822
RHA HQ and HQ units	118	85	*815	930	826	2,774
Regional total	16,158	35,230	*3,586	9,020	10,428	74,423
At 30 September 1984						
North Derbyshire	788	1,964	91	356	404	3,602
South Derbyshire	1,479	3,867	214	860	1,325	7,744
Leicestershire (T)	2,580	6,017	592	1,488	1,765	12,442
North Lincolnshire	945	2,293	111	541	820	4,710
South Lincolnshire	744	1,905	95	422	380	3,546
Bassetlaw	207	624	32	149	152	1,163
Central Nottinghamshire	1,026	2,071	108	474	550	4,229

District health authorities	Ancillary	Nursing[2] and midwifery	Medical[3] and dental	Administrative[4] and clerical	Others[5]	Total
Nottingham (T)	2,299	5,251	554	1,449	2,026	11,579
Barnsley	556	1,474	108	371	344	2,853
Doncaster	711	2,301	129	439	434	4,012
Rotherham	648	1,593	87	354	377	3,058
Sheffield (T)	2,851	6,098	668	1,473	1,646	12,736
RHA HQ and HQ units	110	86	*870	952	800	2,818
Regional total	14,942	35,545	[6]3,656	9,328	11,020	74,492
At 30 September 1985						
North Derbyshire	729	2,052	97	383	439	3,700
South Derbyshire	1,377	3,876	203	825	1,328	7,609
Leicestershire (T)	2,454	6,289	636	1,456	1,819	12,654
North Lincolnshire	854	2,247	123	497	850	4,570
South Lincolnshire	702	1,965	98	430	400	3,596
Bassetlaw	194	664	36	154	165	1,213
Central Nottinghamshire	966	2,136	109	452	557	4,220
Nottingham (T)	2,151	5,506	581	1,387	2,096	11,721
Barnsley	505	1,551	107	348	353	2,863
Doncaster	667	2,325	117	422	442	3,973
Rotherham	623	1,668	105	332	390	3,118
Sheffield (T)	2,672	6,307	662	1,444	1,677	12,763
RHA HQ and HQ Units	97	85	*885	885	819	2,770
Regional total	13,990	36,671	[6]3,759	9,014	11,335	74,768
At 30 September 1986						
North Derbyshire	624	2,128	107	402	492	3,752
South Derbyshire	1,284	3,855	203	830	1,335	7,506
Leicestershire (T)	2,196	6,349	640	1,440	1,838	12,463
North Lincolnshire	828	2,316	114	499	867	4,623
South Lincolnshire	637	2,022	93	422	423	3,597
Bassetlaw	190	687	37	134	161	1,210
Central Nottinghamshire	885	2,193	101	449	573	4,200
Nottingham (T)	1,976	5,339	586	1,247	2,053	11,200
Barnsley	488	1,614	102	330	367	2,901
Doncaster	631	2,432	103	427	464	4,057
Rotherham	584	1,768	101	332	412	3,197
Sheffield (T)	2,555	6,327	684	1,448	1,729	12,743
RHA HQ and HQ Units	97	93	*907	940	827	2,864
Regional total	12,973	37,122	[6]3,778	8,900	11,539	74,313

Source: DHSS annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Excludes consultants from non-teaching districts and senior registrars from all districts —these staff have their contracts with the regional health authority and are shown at * above.

[4] Includes general managers.

[5] Professional and technical, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.

[6] Includes senior staff (see note [3]) whose contracts are held by the regional health authority.

Waltham Forest (Hospital Beds)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of *(a)* acute and *(b)* care of the elderly beds in each hospital in the Waltham Forest district in 1975 and in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

The average daily number of available beds for the acute and geriatric specialties in each hospital in Waltham Forest DHA

		Average available beds	
Name of hospital	Year	Acute	Geriatric
Chingford Hospital	1975	79·8	5·4
	1979	78·2	20·1
	1980	56·1	50·9
	1981	44·4	61·1
	1982	42·0	59·3
	1983	40·3	41·6
	1984	32·6	43·8
	1985	33·0	[illegible]·0
	1986	19·0	[illegible]·7
Connaught Hospital (closed 1977)	1975	111·5	—
Harts Hospital (closed 26 May 1984)	1975	62·0	—
	1979	15·4	52·8
	1980	14·3	47·4
	1981	17·4	57·4
	1982	20·0	58·0
	1983	20·0	58·0
	1984	3·2	18·4
Langthorne Hospital	1975	—	460·5
	1979	—	350·4
	1980	—	356·6
	1981	—	359·6
	1982	—	339·6

Name of hospital	Year	Average available beds: Acute	Average available beds: Geriatric
	1983	—	296·9
	1984	—	222·0
	1985	—	213·5
	1986	—	194·8
Wanstead Hospital	1975	158·1	—
	1979	150·6	—
	1980	146·7	—
	1981	134·7	—
	1982	120·4	—
	1983	134·1	—
	1984	82·4	22·5
	1985	98·3	23·5
	1986	106·2	21·3
Whipps Cross Hospital	1975	680·0	82·6
	1979	645·0	83·0
	1980	644·5	64·4
	1981	636·3	54·3
	1982	659·7	49·9
	1983	640·4	70·1
	1984	589·5	116·0
	1985	572·7	114·8
	1986	568·7	121·5
Woodford Jubilee Hospital (closed August 1986)	1975	45·0	—
	1979	46·4	—
	1980	45·1	—
	1981	29·2	—
	1982	46·1	—
	1983	46·4	—
	1984	35·0	—
	1985	21·0	—
Forest Hospital	1975	39·8	—
	1979	39·1	—
	1980	37·2	—
	1981	39·6	—
	1982	36·6	—
	1983	14·8	—
	1984	34·0	—
	1985	29·7	—
	1986	19·2	—
Lugano Nursing Home (closed 31 May 1983)	1975	26·0	—
	1979	26·0	—
	1980	26·0	—
	1981	26·0	—
	1982	24·7	—
	1983	10·8	—

NHS Property

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the total cost of the work requiring to be carried out on National Health Service properties identified by the National Audit Office report of 28 March, HC 405.

Mrs. Currie: The notional cost of bringing all National Health Service properties in England up to an adequate condition is estimated to be of the order of £1·8 billion. It would be wasteful to devote resources to bring every property to an adequate condition, since some are empty and awaiting disposal and some are planned for replacement. In England the NHS target is to have 70 per cent. of properties in an adequate condition and at present 68 per cent. are considered to be so.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the changes to social security benefits which were announced on 27 April.

Mr. Scott: The measures announced last week included changes to the rules of the housing benefit, income support and family credit schemes and arrangements to provide transitional protection to those claimants in vulnerable groups who have lost significant sums at the point of change to the new schemes.

First, we propose to increase the limit on the amount of capital which renders a claimant ineligible for receipt of housing benefit to £8,000. Subject to the necessary consultation with local authorities and others, this change will be made as soon as possible to take effect from the date when the regulations become effective.

Secondly, some minor changes are being made to the detailed rules of income support and, where applicable, housing benefit and family credit. In particular, we are amending the procedures for taking account of the value of a home no longer occupied by a claimant: for example, because the claimant has been admitted to long-term residential care or has left the marital home because the marriage has broken down. There will now be a period of 26 weeks to allow for the disposal of the property, with provision for extension in exceptional cases of genuine difficulty. Other detailed changes, including those to provide transitional protection to people affected by the changes in rules relating to full-time work, are described in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on 28 April, at columns *253-54*.

The third main change is the introduction of a measure of transitional protection for pensioners, including those in receipt of a widow's pension, long-term sick and disabled people (including those in receipt of industrial injuries benefit), lone parents and families with children who have lost significant sums in housing benefit as a result of the changes introduced on 1 April. The scheme will include those in the relevant groups with capital between £6,000 and £8,000 who will have lost all entitlement to housing benefit between 1 April and the operative date of the change to the capital rule.

The precise way in which assessments will be carried out will be decided in the light of detailed discussions with the representatives of local authorities about the information that can readily be provided. The main basis for payments will be a comparison between the cash sum received by claimants as housing benefit and housing benefit supplement immediately before 1 April and their present cash amount of housing benefit. For those affected by the change to the capital rules the comparison will be with the cash entitlement after the new limit of £8,000 is applied. The comparison will be adjusted to take account of the minimum contribution claimants are required to make to domestic rates which will not be eligible for any protection beyond that already included in the personal allowances. Transitional payments will be designed to ensure that the resulting cash difference does not exceed £2·50 a week. Payments of family income supplement and family credit will be taken into account in making the comparison, with an allowance for the loss of entitlement to free school meals.

These transitional payments will be made from a new departmental central unit to be located in Glasgow.

Payments will be made monthly, or less frequently for small amounts, continuing unless there is a significant change in the claimant's circumstances. They will not be uprated and, as is usual with transitional arrangements, will be phased out as increases in benefits and other changes reduce the necessity for them. The period of phasing will vary from case to case, but for the larger losses protection may be necessary for some time. The new unit will not be fully operational for some weeks, but detailed procedures for claiming these payments will be announced as soon as possible and payments will be backdated to 1 April.

We estimate that the full benefit cost of these measures will be some £100 million in the current financial year. Parliamentary approval for the payments will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate; pending that approval, urgent expenditure of up to £25 million will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund. The provision for administrative costs of local authorities in paying housing benefit will also be adjusted as necessary to reflect additional work arising from these changes.

Family Credit

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the introduction of family credit.

Mr. Scott: The introduction of family credit has been widely welcomed.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the administrative arrangements to be used to implement the amendments to the housing benefit regulations announced by him on 27 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 3 May, at column *424*.

South Manchester Community Health Council

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be responding to the correspondence sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on matters raised by the South Manchester community health council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I replied to the right hon. Member on 28 April.

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the implications of the Griffiths report on care in the community.

Mr. Newton: We have received a number of comments on Sir Roy Griffiths' report and will take account of them in framing our own proposals.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, after the introduction of the proposed community charge, claimants will be informed when their names and addresses are passed to the community charge registration officer of the local authority area in which they live.

Mr. Scott: Yes. Detailed arrangements are still being developed in consultation with the local authority associations, but the intention is that the letters and forms that are to be given to income support claimants will make clear the circumstances in which a claimant's name and address are passed to the community charge registration officer.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement outlining the guidelines to his local offices for deciding eligibility to benefits for those claimants whose previously owned capital sum is held in trust; and if he will indicate specifically whether such guidelines take account of any legal variations pertaining to the laws of trust between Scotland and England.

Mr. Portillo: The Chief Adjudication Officer is responsible for providing guidance to local adjudication officers who decide claims for income support. Guidance on the treatment of capital held in trust is contained in volume 3, paragraphs 30401 to 30464, of the Adjudication Officers' Guide, a copy of which is in the Library. Paragraphs 30421 to 30428 of the AOG contain advice about the different rules of intestacy in Scotland and England.

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each Office of Population Censuses and Surveys monitor published since 1 January 1987, giving the title, date and numbers of copies distributed to date; how many have been distributed free of charge to *(a)* Government, National Health Service and other users and *(b)* press; and how many have been sold so far and at what price.

Mrs. Currie: Up to 31 December 1987, OPCS monitors were available free of charge. Following a review of published statistical data, with effect from 1 January 1988, some of the monitors were discontinued and a charging system for the continued monitors was introduced. A copy of the new arrangements has been placed in the Library.

The information requested is as follows. The sales figures are the numbers sold between 1 January and 29 April 1988.

Monitor Reference No. WR Series
Title: Registrar General's Weekly Return for England and Wales
Date published: Weekly
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,415 approx. weekly
(b) The Press: 10
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. VS Series
Title: Live births, Stillbirths, and Deaths: Registrations
Date published: Monthly
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,550 approx. monthly
(b) The Press: Nil
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH3 87/1
Title: Infant and Perinatal Mortality 1985: Birthweight

Date published: 3 February 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,750 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 110
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH3 87/2
Title: Infant and Perinatal Mortality 1985: DHAs
Date published: 3 February 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,850 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH3 87/3
Title: Infant and Perinatal Mortality 1985: RHAs
Date published: 3 February 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,800 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 110
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. FMI 87/1
Title: Live births during 1986
Date published: 3 March 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,800 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 70
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH2 87/1
Title: Deaths by cause: June quarter 1986
Date published: 10 March 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,200 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 110
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH4 87/1
Title: Deaths from accidents and violence June quarter 1986 Registrations
Date published: 10 March 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,400 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 110
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH4 87/2
Title: Fatal accidents occurring during sporting and leisure activities 1984 and 1985
Date published: 10 March 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,150 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 75
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. AB 87/1
Title: Legal abortions September quarter 1986
Date published: 10 March 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,750 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 75
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MN 87/1
Title: International migration 1985
Date published: 17 March 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 3,100 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB2 87/1
Title: Infectious diseases December quarter 1985
Date published: 7 April 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,520 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MN 87/2
Title: Recorded internal population movements in the United Kingdom Mid 1985-mid 1986
Date published: 12 May 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,820 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 430
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB4 87/1
Title: Hospital In-patient Enquiry (England) Trends 1979-1985
Date published: 19 May 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,340 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 110
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH2 87/2
Title: Deaths by cause, September quarter 1986
Date published: 26 May 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,170 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH4 87/3
Title: Deaths from accidents and violence September quarter 1986
Date published: 26 May 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,540 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. AB 87/2
Title: Legal abortions, December quarter 1986
Date published: 9 June 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,240 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. AB 87/3
Title: Legal abortions 1986
Date published: 9 June 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,340 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. PP1 87/1
Title: Mid 1986 population estimates for England and Wales
Date published: 16 June 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 4,660 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 390
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MN 87/3
Title: International migration: mid 1985 to mid 1986
Date published: 30 June 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,180 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. AB 87/4
Title: Legal abortions 1986; residents of regional and district health areas
Date published: 30 June 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,730 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 370
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB2 87/2
Title: Infectious diseases, March quarter 1986
Date published: 21 July 1987
Number of copies distributed to—

(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,690 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. FM3 87/1
Title: Adoptions in England and Wales notified during 1985 and 1986
Date published: 11 August 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 1,490 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB4 87/2
Title: Hospital In-patient Enquiry (England): Maternity statistics 1982 (revised), 1983 and 1984
Date published: 18 August 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,440 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. AB 87/5
Title: Legal abortions, March quarter 1987
Date published: 2 September 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 3,140 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. FM1 87/2
Title: Trends in conceptions to women residents in England and Wales 1975-85
Date published: 2 September 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 3,800 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB2 87/3
Title: Infectious diseases, June quarter 1986
Date published: 2 September 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,590 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 110
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH2 87/3
Title: Deaths by cause 1986
Date published: 8 September 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 3,140 (approx.)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH4 87/4
Title: Deaths from accidents and violence 1986
Date published: 8 September 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,560 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB3 87/1
Title: Congenital malformations and monitoring system 1986
Date published: 22 September 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,590 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. FM1 87/3
Title: Births by birthplace of mother, 1986: local authority areas
Date published: 13 October 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 3,760)
(b) The Press: 340
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No FM2 87/1
Title: Marriages in England and Wales during 1986
Date published: 13 October 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,490 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. FM2 87/2
Title: Divorces in England and Wales during 1986
Date published: 13 October 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,540 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH2 87/4
Title: Deaths by cause, March quarter 1987 registrations
Date published: 17 November 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 3,240 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH4 87/5
Title: Deaths from accidents and violence: March quarter 1987 registrations
Date published: 17 November 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government/NHS and others: 2,390 (approx)
(b) The Press:60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB2 87/4
Title: Infectious diseases, September quarter 1986
Date published: 24 November 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,440 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB4 87/3
Title: Hospital In-patient Enquiry (England) Day case statistics 1985
Date published: 1 December 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,090 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. AB 87/6
Title: Legal abortions, June quarter 1987
Date published: 8 December 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 3,340 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. MB2 87/5
Title: Infectious diseases, December quarter 1986
Date published: 15 December 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,610 (approx)
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. DH3 87/4
Title: Infant and perinatal mortality 1986 DHAs
Date published: 15 December 1987
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,800 (approx)
(b) The Press: 65
Numbers sold: Nil

Monitor Reference No. WR
Title: Registrar General's Weekly Return for England and Wales
Date published: Weekly
Number of copies distributed to—

(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,261
(b) The Press: 20
Numbers sold: 338
Price: £1·00*

Monitor Reference No. MB4 88/1
Title: Hospital In-patient Enquiry (England) Maternity statistics 1985
Date published: 18 January 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 2,400
(b) The Press: 60
Numbers sold: Nil
Price: Unpriced

Monitor Reference No. PP3 88/1
Title: Mid 1985-based population projections for local authority areas in England
Date published: 19 January 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,762
(b) The Press: 360
Numbers sold: 762
Price: £2·00*

Monitor Reference No. SS 88/1
Title: Cigarette smoking 1972 to 1986
Date published: 9 February 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,232
(b) The Press: 120
Numbers sold: 507
Price: £2·00

Monitor Reference No. DH4 88/1
Title: Deaths from accidents and violence, June quarter 1987 registrations
Date published: 9 February 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,423
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 578
Price: £1·00*

Monitor Reference No. DH2 88/1
Title: Deaths by cause, June quarter 1987 registrations
Date published: 9 February 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,423
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 578
Price: £1·00*

Monitor Reference No. PP3 88/2
Title: Mid 1985-based population projections for health authority areas in England
Date published: 8 March 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,762
(b) The Press: 360
Numbers sold: 762
Price: £1·50

Monitor Reference No. AB 88/1
Title: Legal abortions, September quarter 1987
Date published: 8 March 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,452
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 574
Price: £1·00*

Monitor Reference No. MB2 88/1
Title: Infectious diseases, March quarter 1987
Date published: 29 March 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,432
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 509
Price: £2·50*

Monitor Reference No. DH4 88/2
Title: Deaths from accidents and violence, September quarter 1987 registrations
Date published: 12 April 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,423
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 578
Price: £1·00*

Monitor Reference No. DH2 88/2
Title: Deaths by cause, September quarter 1987 registrations
Date published: 12 April 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,423
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 578
Price: £1·00*

Monitor Reference No. EL 88/1
Title: Electoral statistics 1988, local government areas
Date published: 26 April 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,106
(b) The Press: 480
Numbers sold: 528
Price: £2·00

Monitor Reference No. DH3 88/1
Title: Infant and perinatal mortality 1986 Birthweight
Date published: 26 April 1988
Number of copies distributed to—
(a) Government-NHS and others: 1,456
(b) The Press: 80
Numbers sold: 535
Price: £1·50

* Also available on subscription.

ENERGY

Petroleum Licences

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) on what basis since 1979 his Department has granted licences to search and bore for petroleum under section 2 of the 1934 Act;

(2) what method has been used to allocate individual petroleum licences since June 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: Since 1979 licences have mainly been issued on a discretionary basis, in which the applicant's financial and technical competence and his ability to meet other aims of Government policy, notably his readiness to pursue a comprehensive exploration of the licensed area, have been the major factors in deciding whether or not to grant a licence. A small number of offshore production licences have been awarded by a sealed-bid cash tender system.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, before granting licences to search and bore for petroleum, his Department informs the freehold owners of land affected of the intention to issue such licences.

Mr. Parkinson: Freehold owners of land affected are not informed of the intention to grant licences, because the award of a petroleum licence by itself does not confer on the licence holder any rights over the freeholder's land.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how his Department notifies freehold owners of

land to be affected that it is the intention to grant licences under the Petroleum (Production) Regulations 1976 (S.I. 1976 No. 1129).

Mr. Parkinson: The 1976 regulations referred to by my hon. Friend have now been superseded by other regulations and licences are no longer awarded under them.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what rights are conferred on an operator granted a petroleum production licence in relation to land the operator does not own.

Mr. Parkinson: The grant of a petroleum licence confers on the licensee the rights to search for and get petroleum in the licensed area, depending on the precise type of licence he holds, irrespective of the ownership of the land in question. However, it does not by itself confer any other rights, and so he would have to obtain permission to enter the land before he could exercise his rights under the petroleum licence.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many petroleum licences have been issued by his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: The figures for all types of licences issued, both offshore and onshore, are as follows:

Year	*Number of licences issued*
1979	44
1980	138
1981	61
1982	61
1983	127
1984	26
1985	128
1986	94
1987	68
[1]1988	67

[1] To date.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the criteria laid down for determining the price to be paid for petroleum licences.

Mr. Parkinson: Licences are awarded in return for initial application fees and subsequent periodic rental payments. Application fees are set to cover the administrative costs of dealing with the application. The rental payments on various types of licences are designed to be sufficiently low in the early years of the licence to encourage exploration. In the longer-term licences, once the exploration phase has been completed the general principle is to increase the rental year by year in order to encourage the licensee to surrender any areas not required for petroleum development.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy in what circumstances it is possible to vary the terms of a petroleum licence.

Mr. Parkinson: The petroleum licence is a contractual document and it is not possible to vary any of its terms except by agreement between the parties.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many petroleum licences have been granted, withdrawn or given up, amended or varied, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer my hon. Friend to the figures given to him today for the issue of petroleum licences. The figures for surrendered licences of all types are as follows:

Year	*Number of licences surrendered*
1979	6
1980	7
1981	9
1982	25
1983	31
1984	21
1985	27
1986	27
1987	65
[1]1988	7

[1] To date.

Notes:

1. Figures do not include licences expiring at the end of the term.
2. Some of the surrendered licences were replaced with different types of licences.

Each licence contains an agree work obligation which is commercially confidential to the licensee. It is not uncommon for these obligations to be varied or amended. Likewise, assignments of licence interests and changes of company names are frequently the reasons for licence changes. Records on amendments to the licences are not kept in a readily available form and the amount of work involved in compiling such statistics would be disproportionate to the value of the information obtained.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the companies to which petroleum licences have been granted since June 1979 and the price paid for each licence.

Mr. Parkinson: The companies granted petroleum licences since 1979 are published in the *London Gazette and Edinburgh Gazette*, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The fees and charges for petroleum licences are detailed in the gazette notices inviting applications and in the relevant regulations governing the award of each type of licence, which are also available in the Library of the House. It is not possible to give a total price for every licence awarded as the majority of licences issued since 1979 are still in existence, and the total consideration for the licence will depend on future unknown events, such as whether the licence is voluntarily surrendered before it reaches its full term.

British Coal (Investment)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has had with the management of British Coal concerning future investment in the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal's agreed capital allocation for 1988-89 is £650 million. How this is allocated between coalfields is a management matter for the corporation.

ENVIRONMENT

Land Availability

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a summary on a regional basis of household projections to

the latest available date and, in each case, indicate the monitoring and verification procedures his Department adopts with the county planning authorities as to their returns on land availability.

Mr. Waldegrave: A regional breakdown of household projections was included in the recently published DOE booklet "1985 Based Estimates of Numbers of Households in England etc, 1985-2001", which is available in the Library. I am sending my hon. Friend the relevant extract.

In planning policy guidance note 3 we have recently repeated our advice to local planning authorities that, in consultation with housebuilders, they should undertake regular studies of land availability, to ensure that land supplies match the five-year requirement indicated by the provisions of the development plan. The results of such studies are reported to my Department and (as from 1987) are published in annual progress reports.

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement following his consultation paper setting out proposals for the implementation of the European Community directive on environmental assessment.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are giving careful consideration to the responses to the consultation paper. We intend to lay before Parliament regulations under the European Communities Act 1972 in order to comply with the directive's requirement that member states shall take the necessary measures by 3 July 1988.

Water Pollution

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on how many occasions for the last year for which figures are available local water authority consents, as specified under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, were broken in Great Britain;

(2) how many private companies broke water authority consents, as laid down under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, during 1987; and which were the companies concerned;

(3) on how many occasions in the last year for which figures are available the River Calder in West Yorkshire suffered from pollution beyond the agreed consents as laid down by Yorkshire water authority; and if he will list the companies and organisations involved and the frequency of the said polluting;

(4) on how many occasions in the last year for which figures are available consents for suspended solids in British waterways were breached by private companies; on how many occasions consents for monohydric phenols were breached by private companies and on how many occasions consents for ammonia were breached by private companies in respect of consents set by water authorities in the British Isles as laid down by the Control of Pollution Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally, but the public registers which all water authorities are required to maintain contain details of all authorised discharges, including particulars of effluent samples taken.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions when water authority consents were breached by polluters legal action was taken by water authorities and convictions achieved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Information collected by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department shows that there were about 35 convictions in 1986 following action by water authorities for breaches of discharge consents. The figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total amount of fines collected during 1987 following prosecutions under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, in respect of breach of water authority consents;

(2) on how many occasions during 1987 the maximum fine of £2,000 was levied by a magistrates' court against an offender under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in respect of water pollution due to the breach of water authority consents.

Mr. Moynihan: Information about penalties imposed following prosecutions under part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is collected by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. I understand, however, that information for 1987 is not yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on how many occasions British water authorities have been in breach of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in respect of breach of consents for water pollution as agreed with his Department;

(2) which water authorities broke water pollution consents as laid down by the Control of Water Pollution Act 1974 during 1987; and what was the frequency of such breaches.

Mr. Moynihan: In 1986, the first year for which comprehensive data are available, 965 sewage treatment works breached their consents on more than 5 per cent. of occasions for which samples were taken. These works were spread across all water authorities in England and Wales. The final figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the volume of raw human sewage which is allowed to find its way into British estuaries for the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Figures are not held centrally. However, most sewage now receives treatment before being discharged to estuaries. As a result, the quality of water in a number of estuaries—including the Humber, Mersey, Tees, Thames and Tyne — has improved in recent years.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been taken out against water authorities by his Department due to breach of consents and what was the total sum of fines for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Moynihan: No prosecutions have so far been taken out against water authorities by the Department for breaches of consents. However, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, in examining detailed reasons for non-compliance, will continue to consider whether prosecution is justified in individual cases.

Greater Manchester Exhibition Centre

Mr. Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what public money has been committed by his Department to the setting up of the Greater Manchester exhibition centre (G-MEC); what information he has about the project's other sources of funding; and what steps he has taken to ensure that this expenditure is cost-effective.

Mr. Trippier: The former central station train hall was converted into the GMEX centre and opened in March 1986. Public sector input to the conversion cost totalled about £13·5 million, of which the urban programme contributed £9·4 million and the European regional development fund provided £4 million. The private sector contribution was approximately £11 million.

At the abolition of the Greater Manchester county council the liabilities and rights in GMEX were transferred to the Greater Manchester Residuary Body. The district council has generally been content for the residuary body to deal with the complex GMEX issues and to protect the interests of the ratepayers, and it remains with the residuary body to continue to handle these matters.

Water Rates

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the combined standing charge to domestic ratepayers for water and sewerage in each of the English water authority areas in 1985, 1986, and 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is set out in the accompanying table.

Water Authority standing charges 1985-86 to 1987-88

Standing charges Water and Sewerage combined

Water authority	*1985-86* £·p	*1986-87* £·p	*1987-88* £·p
North West	14·50	16·00	17·00
Northumbrian	20·00	21·00	22·00
Severn Trent[1]	0·00	0·00	0·00
Yorkshire	9·00	10·00	11·00
Anglian	30·30	33·30	35·10
Thames	24·00	24·00	24·00
Southern	22·30	24·10	26·00
Wessex[1]	0·00	0·00	0·00
South West	31·20	32·00	33·00

Notes:
[1] Severn Trent and Wessex both have minimum charges.
Source: Water Authority annual charges returns to DOE.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing the average annual payments in water rates per household in each of Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire, in each year since 1982.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is not available for individual local authorities.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what water rate was charged by *(a)* the South Western water authority and *(b)* the Wessex water authority in each year since 1974.

Mr. Moynihan: The information on water rates requested is set out in the accompanying table for each of the English water authorities. The table shows the average household bill for customers connected to both water and sewerage and being charged on the basis of rateable value. Information on average bills for 1988-89 is still being analysed by the Department and is not yet available for publication.

Water authority average household bills 1975-76 to 1987-88

Water authority	*1975-76* £·p	*1976-77* £·p	*1977-78* £·p	*1978-79* £·p	*1979-80* £·p	*1980-81* £·p	*1981-82* £·p	*1982-83* £·p	*1983-84* £·p	*1984-85* £·p	*1985-86* £·p	*1986-87* £·p	*1987-88* £·p
Combined all services													
North West	25·28	29·56	32·02	34·62	37·90	46·80	54·69	59·86	63·16	68·25	77·57	85·19	91·12
Northumbrian	27·34	36·40	30·55	32·06	33·94	41·95	49·19	56·86	64·52	75·22	80·38	84·34	88·63
Severn Trent	26·63	36·30	35·67	35·95	40·51	48·99	56·78	62·44	64·63	67·88	76·16	83·55	89·53
Yorkshire	25·26	31·37	33·02	35·60	39·36	49·04	57·21	65·30	68·78	72·64	82·30	90·96	97·72
Anglian	31·12	43·48	46·12	45·02	48·83	63·01	75·08	82·66	87·80	93·96	105·98	116·69	124·03
Thames	21·80	28·15	29·31	34·66	38·62	47·82	54·47	60·77	66·74	73·41	80·75	83·09	87·74
Southern	35·42	36·68	40·40	42·20	43·80	56·60	67·00	74·40	79·20	83·84	93·76	102·78	109·10
Wessex	31·23	42·05	45·23	47·27	57·22	65·44	72·87	78·49	81·56	85·59	95·35	107·09	114·45
South West	35·01	45·41	48·26	49·68	54·57	66·72	75·22	81·24	87·96	93·48	104·59	110·90	116·08
English averages	26·65	33·90	35·13	37·50	41·47	51·37	59·47	66·01	70·92	75·73	84·56	91·25	97·18

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *234*, if he will name the member of the London Residuary Body whose remuneration was reduced.

Mr. Chope: Mr. Jack Esling.

Winget-type Houses

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Winget type houses are still in existence in Great Britain; how many have been privately purchased by tenants since the Housing Defects Act 1984; and how many applications for repurchase under the Act have been made by Winget-type householders to local authorities in Great Britain.

Mrs. Roe: Four local authorities in Great Britain have reported 3,836 Winget-type houses, of which 175 were sold to tenants. No information is available on numbers sold since 1984, but these are likely to be small. The authorities have reported 27 applications for assistance under the housing defects legislation, though that figure is not comprehensive. No information is readily available on applications specifically for repurchase on hardship grounds.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards a satisfactory method of structural repair for Winget-type houses with the national house building certificate and local authorities in consultation with his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: No repair system for Winget houses has yet been submitted to PRC Homes Ltd. Repairs are not likely to be easy, given the structure of the house and the small numbers sold.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the housing investment programme was allocated to the repurchase of Winget-type houses within England and Wales in the last available financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities are free to determine their own expenditure priorities within the resources available to them, including their housing investment programme allocations. For 1988-89, £20 million of additional allocations will shortly be distributed to authorities with particular difficulties in meeting their obligations under the housing defects legislation. The allocations will not be made in respect of specific designated house types.

Brentwood (Rates)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what percentage level Brentwood local authority is above his Department's target in the current financial year; and whether it falls within the current criteria for possible rate capping.

Mr. Chope: The setting of expenditure targets has not applied since the financial year 1985-86. Under section 2 of the Rates Act 1984, as modified by the Rate Limitation (Designation of Authorities) (Exemption) Order 1988, made on 13 April, an authority cannot be designated for rate limitation for 1989-90 if its total expenditure in 1988-89 is likely to be less than £13·1 million. Brentwood has reported budgeted total expenditure for 1988-89 of £12·138 million.

Football League

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now seek a meeting with the 92 Football League chairmen to ensure a discussion on matters including crowd safety and English participation in European football; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no immediate plans for a meeting with the 92 Football League chairmen. As I told the hon. Member in my answer on 20 April, I hold regular meetings with the president of the League and other football authorities to discuss counter-hooliganism measures.

Home Extensions

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to allow grants to residents for domestic extensions to their home in an effort to ease overcrowding; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Improvement grants can already be paid at the discretion of local authorities towards the cost of domestic extensions in certain circumstances, including exceptionally where additional living or bedroom space is required.

Urban Development

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the grant memoranda for urban development corporations.

Mr. Trippier: Payments of grant-in-aid to urban development corporations, in common with payments of grant-in-aid to other non-departmental bodies, are governed by memoranda which set out the terms and conditions on which such payments are made.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount made available by his Department under the urban development grant programme for each year since the introduction of the grant in 1982.

Mr. Trippier: The following table shows the urban development grant outturn figures for years since the scheme began.

Urban development grant expenditure

	£ million
1983-84	7
1984-85	15
1985-86	22
1986-87	22
1987-88	[1]25

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount received by each parliamentary constituency under the urban development grant programme since 1982.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Unified Business Rate

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the manner in which new commercial and industrial premises, either presently unassessed or yet to be built, will be treated when the transitional arrangements for the introduction of the unified business rate are implemented.

Mr. Howard: The transitional arrangements are designed to protect those ratepayers who would otherwise face large rate increases between 1989-90 and 1990-91: where there is no liability to rates in the earlier year, transitional protection would be inappropriate. We therefore intend that transitional arrangements should

apply to property which is in rateable occupation before 1 April 1990, even if a rateable value has not been entered in the valuation list on that date.

Housing Defects

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government have completed their consultations on the proposed new expenditure limits for grant eligible reinstatement works under the housing defects legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am most grateful to all those who responded to our consultation proposals. We have, as a result, been able to settle the final figures for each designated house type. Our suggestion that the limits should be revised within a structure of four main costs bands was widely welcomed, as indeed were most of the details. Some concern was expressed on whether £27,000 would be sufficient for repairs to the "Reema Hollow Panel" house and we have therefore decided instead to place that type within the top £31,000 cost band.

The new limits will therefore be as follows:

House type	*New limit* £	*Present limit* £
Local designations and any new designations	14,000	14,000
Cornish Unit: 1 storey PRC	17,000	14,000
Dorran: 1 storey PRC	—	16,000
Gregory	—	14,000
Myton: 1 storey PRC	—	16,000
Newland: 1 storey PRC	—	16,000
Tarran: 1 storey PRC	—	14,000
Unity and Butterley: 1 storey PRC	—	20,000
Wessex: 1 storey PRC	—	24,000
Cornish Unit: 2 storey PRC	23,000	16,000
Stent	—	20,000
Unity and Butterley: 2 storey PRC	—	20,000
Airey	27,000	16,000
Boswell	—	14,000
Dorran: 2 storey PRC	—	16,000
Dyke	—	24,000
Myton: 2 storey PRC	—	16,000
Newland: 2 storey PRC	—	16,000
Schindler and Hawksley SGS	—	24,000
Smith	—	20,000
Stonecrete	—	16,000
Tarran: 2 storey PRC	—	14,000
Underdown	—	20,000
Waller	—	24,000
Wates	—	20,000
Winget	—	20,000
Boot	31,000	20,000
Orlit	—	24,000
Parkinson	—	20,000
Reema Hollow Panel	—	20,000
Wessex: 2 storey PRC	—	24,000
Woolaway	—	20,000

These new limits should enable local authorities themselves to decide the appropriate level of grant, in the majority of cases, without further reference to the Department.

The parliamentary order implementing these new limits has now been made by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales and, provided Parliament is content, will come into operation on Tuesday 31 May. My officials will be writing to local authorities, home owners groups and repairers to make sure that all those with an interest are fully aware of the changes.

Trafalgar Square (Statue)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on plans for the erection of a statue on the empty plinth in the north-west corner of Trafalgar square.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no such plans before me.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will ensure that any future official publicity material in relation to the community charge will inform future community charge payers that their name and address may be sold without their consent or knowledge and that their name and address on the register may be inspected by police, Inland Revenue, the Department of Health and Social Security and other organisations without their consent or knowledge.

Mr. Howard: Paragraph 16 of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill would allow regulations to be made requiring the sale of extracts from community charges registers. No decision has yet been taken to make use of that regulation-making power.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis he has concluded that it is in the public interest for the extract of names and addresses from the community charge register to be open for public inspection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: It is in the public interest that the community charges register should be accurate and up to date. The availability of the extract for public inspection will be of assistance in achieving that aim.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the circumstances in which it will constitute a reasonable step, under clause 6(8) of the Local Government Finance Bill, for the staff of the community charge registration officer to question individuals about their neighbours for the purposes of compiling the community charge register.

Mr. Ridley: It will be for the registration officer to decide, in the first instance, what constitutes a "reasonable step" in each case for the purposes of obtaining information.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether data held by district health authorities will be prescribed information under paragraph 9(2)(D) of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill;

(2) whether Inland Revenue records will be prescribed information under paragraph 9(2)(D) of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill;

(3) whether data held by family practitioner committees will be prescribed information under paragraph 9(2)(D) of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Ridley: Data held by family practitioner committees, the Inland Revenue and district health authorities will not be required to be supplied to community charge registration officers under schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local authorities' records on their

own employees and their records on job applicants will be prescribed information under paragraph 9(2)(D) of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: We are considering whether names and addresses from local authorities' employment records should be made available to community charges registration officers.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the police will be permitted to pass any information on individuals, whether in writing or orally, to the community charge registration officer; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether all information held by the police will be prescribed information under paragraph 9(2)(D) of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Ridley: Information to be supplied to community charges registration officers will be governed by regulations to be made under schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill. Those regulations will exclude police information from the information to be supplied by precepting authorities.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has consulted the Law Society about his proposal made in Standing Committee E, on 11 February, *Official Report*, column 619, that solicitors will inform the community charge registration officer of an individual's change of address.

Mr. Ridley: No. I assume that those moving house will want their solicitors to notify local authorities of the change of address, as is normal practice now with rates.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether all information held by local authority social services departments will be prescribed information under paragraph 9(2)(D) of schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Ridley: The information to be supplied to a community charges registration officer by a charging or precepting authority will be limited to the name and address of the person concerned and the dates on or between which he was known to the authority. It will not include the reason for his being known to the authority, or the source of the information within the authority.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there are any circumstances in which health authorities will be required to provide information to the community charge registration officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: There are no circumstances in which health authorities will be required to provide information to community charges registration officers.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the individuals and organisations from whom he has received representations advocating that local authorities should be required to make available for sale the list of names and addresses from the community charge register.

Mr. Ridley: The Government have received representations in favour of the sale of the extract of addresses and names from the Guild of British Newspaper Editors and the Retail Credit Group.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the community charge registration officer will be permitted to collect any information on children under 17 years.

Mr. Ridley: It will be for each registration officer to decide, in the first instance, what information he needs in order to compile and maintain the register. There is no reason to believe that it will generally be necessary to collect information on children under 17.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the level of community charge which will apply in the Metropolitan borough of Rotherham.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* The community charge applying in any area will depend on a number of factors, in particular, the level of spending in that area at that time. On the basis of 1987-88 spending, I estimate the community charge in Rotherham would have been £189 in the first year of the new system and £252 once the new arrangements were fully in place.

Bathing Water (Survey)

Mrs. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now announce the results of the survey of bathing water quality in 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: The results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the 1987 bathing season are set out in summary form.

The 1987 results show that 262 out of 374 bathing waters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland—70 per cent. — were considered to meet the directive's mandatory bacteriological standards. This shows a significant improvement over 1986, when only 62 per cent. met these standards. The results have been calculated on the same basis in the two years, although a small number of additional waters were included in the 1987 survey.

These results are encouraging and show that good progress is being made in bringing all our identified bathing waters up to EC standards. This is being done through a major programme of capital spending to improve bathing water quality, mainly through the construction of long sea outfalls, and we are currently reviewing this programme with water authorities.

I shall arrange for a more detailed summary of the results to be placed in the Library. The results will also be sent to the Commission in accordance with article 13 of the bathing water directive.

Bathing waters survey—1987 results (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
Compliance with bathing water directive (76/160/EEC): coliform standards

	Full sampling and analysis		*Partial sampling and/or analysis*		*No sampling*	*Total*
	pass	*fail*	*pass*	*fail*		
Northumbrian Water Authority	9	10	0	0	0	19
Yorkshire Water Authority	20	2	0	0	0	22
Anglian Water Authority	18	10	0	0	0	28
Thames Water Authority	0	2	0	0	0	2
Southern Water Authority	38	27	0	0	0	65
Wessex Water Authority (South Coast)	26	1	0	0	0	27
South West Water Authority	96	12	0	1	0	109
Wessex Water Authority (Bristol Channel)	6	5	0	0	0	11
Welsh Water Authority	28	19	0	0	0	47
North West Water Authority	10	20	0	0	0	30
Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland	11	3	0	0	0	14
TOTALS	262	111	0	1	0	374

Bathing Waters Survey—1987 Results
(England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
Compliance with Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC): Coliform Standards

	1987 Result	*1986 Result*
Northumbrian Water Authority		
Spittal	Fail	Fail
Bamburgh/Seahouses	Pass	Pass
Beadnell	Pass	Pass
Low Newton	Pass	Pass
Alnmouth	Fail	Pass
Warkworth	Pass	Pass
Druridge Bay	Pass	Pass
Newbiggin	Fail	Fail
South Beach/Seaton Sluice	Pass	Fail
Whitley Bay	Pass	Pass
Tynemouth	Pass	Fail
South Shields	Pass	Fail
Marsden	Fail	Pass
Roker/Whitburn	Fail	Pass
Seaham	Fail	Fail
Crimdon	Fail	Fail
Seaton Carew	Fail	Fail
Redcar	Fail	Fail
Saltburn	Fail	Fail
Yorkshire Water Authority		
Staithes	Pass	No Survey
Runswick Bay	Pass	Pass
Sandsend	Pass	Pass
Whitby	Pass	Pass
Robin Hood Bay	Pass	Pass
Scarborough North Bay	Pass	Pass
Scarborough South Bay	Fail	Fail
Cayton Bay	Pass	Pass
Filey	Pass	Pass
Reighton	Pass	Pass
Flamborough North Landing	Pass	Pass
Flamborough South Landing	Pass	Fail
Bridlington North Beach	Pass	Pass
Bridlington South Beach	Pass	Pass
Wilsthorpe	Pass	Pass
Fraisthorpe	Pass	Pass
Earls Dyke	Pass	Pass
Barmston	Pass	Pass
Skipsea	Pass	Pass
Hornsea	Pass	Pass
Tunstall	Pass	Pass
Withernsea	Fail	Fail
Anglian Water Authority		
Cleethorpes	Fail	Fail
Mablethorpe Town	Fail	Pass
Sutton-on-sea	Fail	Fail
Moggs Eye	Pass	Pass
Anderby	Pass	Pass
Chapel St. Leonard	Fail	Pass
Ingoldmells South	Fail	Pass
Skegness	Pass	Pass
Heacham	Pass	Pass
Hunstanton Beach	Pass	Pass
Wells	Pass	Fail
Sheringham	Fail	Fail
Cromer	Fail	Pass
Mundesley	Pass	Pass
Great Yarmouth North	Pass	Pass
Great Yarmouth Pier	Pass	Fail
Great Yarmouth South	Pass	Fail
Lowestoft North	Pass	Fail
Lowestoft South	Pass	Pass

	1987 Result	1986 Result
Felixstowe North	Pass	Pass
Felixstowe South	Pass	Fail
Dovercourt	Fail	Pass
Walton	Fail	Pass
Frinton	Pass	Pass
Holland	Pass	Pass
Clacton	Pass	Pass
Jaywick	Pass	Pass
Brightlingsea	Fail	Pass
Thames Water Authority		
Southend Thorpe Bay	Fail	Fail
Southend Westcliffe Bay	Fail	Pass
Southern Water Authority		
Leysdown	Pass	Fail
West Beach	Pass	Pass
Herne Bay	Fail	Pass
Minnis Bay	Pass	Pass
St. Mildreds Bay	Fail	Pass
The Bay Margate	Pass	Pass
Margate Fulsam Rock	Pass	Fail
Joss Bay	Fail	Fail
Broadstairs	Fail	Fail
Ramsgate	Fail	Pass
Sandwich Bay	Fail	Fail
Deal Castle	Fail	Fail
St. Margarets Bay	Pass	Fail
Folkestone	Fail	Fail
Sandgate	Fail	Fail
Hythe	Fail	Fail
Dymchurch	Fail	Fail
St. Marys Bay	Fail	Fail
Littlestone	Pass	Fail
Camber	Fail	Pass
Winchelsea	Pass	Pass
Hastings	Fail	Pass
Bexhill	Pass	Pass
Normans Bay	Pass	Pass
Pevensey Bay	Fail	Pass
Eastbourne	Pass	Pass
Seaford	Fail	Fail
Newhaven	Fail	Pass
Saltdean	Pass	Pass
Brighton	Pass	Pass
Hove	Fail	Fail
Southwick	Fail	No Survey
South Lancing	Fail	Fail
Worthing	Fail	Fail
Littlehampton	Fail	Pass
Middleton-on-sea	Pass	Pass
Bognor Regis	Pass	Pass
Pagham	Pass	Pass
Selsey	Fail	Pass
Bracklesham Bay	Pass	Pass
West Wittering	Pass	Pass
West of Eastoke	Pass	Pass
West Hayling	Pass	Pass
Eastney	Pass	Pass
Southsea	Pass	Pass
Stokes Day	Pass	Pass
Lee-on-Solent	Pass	Pass
Calshot	Pass	Pass
Lepe	Pass	Pass
Milford-on-sea	Fail	Pass
Christchurch Bay	Pass	Pass
Highcliffe	Pass	Pass
Compton Bay	Pass	Pass
Totland Bay	Pass	Fail
Colwell Bay	Pass	Fail
Gurnard	Fail	Fail
Cowes	Pass	Fail
Ryde	Fail	Fail
Seagrove	Pass	Pass
St. Helens	Pass	Pass
Bembridge	Fail	Fail
Whitecliff Bay	Pass	Pass
Sandown	Pass	Pass
Shanklin	Pass	Pass
Ventnor	Pass	Fail
Wessex Water Authority (South Coast)		
Christchurch, Highcliffe Castle	Pass	Pass
Christchurch, Avon Beach	Fail	Pass
Christchurch, Mudeford Sandbank	Pass	Pass
Bournemouth, Hengistbury	Pass	Pass
Bournemouth Pier	Pass	Pass
Poole, Shore Road Sandbanks	Pass	Pass
Poole Harbour Sandbanks	Pass	Pass
Poole Harbour Lake	Pass	Pass
Poole Harbour, Rockley Sands	Pass	Fail
Shell Bay	Pass	Pass
Studland	Pass	Pass
Swanage	Pass	Pass
Kimmeridge Bay	Pass	Pass
Lulworth Cove	Pass	Pass
Durdle Door East	Pass	Pass
Durdle Door West	Pass	Pass
Ringstead	Pass	Pass
Bowleaze Cove	Pass	Pass
Church Ope Cove	Pass	Pass
Weymouth, Lodmoor	Pass	Pass
Weymouth Central	Pass	Pass
Portland Harbour, Castle Cove	Pass	Pass
Portland Harbour, Sandsfoot Castle	Pass	Pass
West Bay (west)	Pass	Pass
Eypemouth	Pass	Fail
Seatown	Pass	Pass
Charmouth West	Pass	Fail
South West Water Authority		
Lyme Regis	Pass	Fail
Seaton (Devon)	Pass	Pass
Beer	Pass	Pass
Sidmouth	Pass	Pass
Ladram Bay	Pass	No Survey
Budleigh Salterton	Fail	Pass
Sandy Bay	Pass	Pass
Exmouth	Pass	Fail
Dawlish Warren	Pass	Pass
Dawlish	Pass	Pass
Teignmouth	Fail	Pass
Shaldon	Pass	Fail
Ness Cove	Pass	Pass
Maidencombe	Pass	Pass
Watcombe	Pass	Pass
Oddicombe	Pass	Pass
Babbacombe	Pass	Pass
Redgate	Pass	Pass
Meadfoot	Pass	Pass
Beacon Cove	Pass	No Survey
Torre Abbey	Pass	Pass
Hollicombe	Pass	Pass
Paignton	Pass	Pass
Goodrington	Fail	Pass
Broadsands	Pass	Pass
Shoalstone	Pass	No Survey
St. Mary's Bay	Pass	Pass
Dartmouth Castle and Sugary Cove	Pass	Pass
Blackpool Sands	Pass	Pass
Slapton Sands	Pass	Pass
Mill Bay	Pass	Pass
Salcombe North Sands	Pass	Fail
Salcombe South Sands	Pass	Fail
Hope Cove	Pass	Pass
Thurlestone Incomplete Returns	Fail	Fail
Bantham	Pass	Pass
Bigbury-on-Sea	Pass	Pass
Challaborough	Pass	Pass
Mothecombe	Pass	Pass
Wembury	Pass	Pass
Bovisand	Pass	Pass
Plymouth Hoe	Pass	Fail
Portwrinkle	Fail	No Survey

	1987 Result	1986 Result
Downderry	Pass	No Survey
Seaton (Cornwall)	Pass	Fail
Millendreath	Pass	No survey
East Looe	Pass	Pass
Readymoney	Fail	Fail
Polkerris	Pass	Pass
Par	Pass	Fail
Crinnis	Pass	Pass
Charlestown and Duporth	Pass	Pass
Porthpean	Pass	Pass
Pentewan	Fail	Fail
Polstreath	Pass	Pass
Port Mellon	Pass	Pass
Gorran Haven	Pass	Pass
Porthluney	Pass	Pass
Pendower	Pass	Pass
Gyllyngvase	Pass	Pass
Swanpool	Pass	Pass
Maen Porth	Pass	Pass
Porthallow	Fail	Fail
Porthoustock	Pass	Pass
Coverack	Pass	Pass
Kennack Sands	Pass	Pass
Pollurian Cove	Pass	Pass
Poldhu Cove	Pass	Pass
Gunwalloe Cove	Pass	Pass
Porthleven	Pass	Fail
Praa Sands	Pass	Pass
Perran Sands	Pass	Pass
Marazion and Mounts Bay	Fail	Fail
Porthcurno	Pass	Pass
Sennen	Pass	Pass
Porthmeor	Pass	Pass
Porth Gwidden	Pass	Fail
Porthminster	Pass	Pass
Carbis Bay	Pass	Pass
The Towans	Pass	Pass
Portreath	Pass	Pass
Porthtowan	Pass	Pass
Trevaunance Cove	Pass	Fail
Perranporth	Pass	Pass
Holywell Bay	Pass	Pass
Crantock	Pass	Pass
Fistral	Pass	Pass
Towan	Pass	Pass
Watergate	Pass	Pass
Mawgan Porth	Pass	Fail
Treyarnon Bay	Pass	Pass
Constantine Bay	Pass	No Survey
Mother Ivey's Bay	Pass	No Survey
Harlyn Bay	Pass	Pass
Trevone Bay	Pass	Fail
Rock	Pass	Fail
Daymer Bay	Pass	Pass
Polzeath	Pass	Pass
Widemouth Sand	Pass	Pass
Bude	Fail	Fail
Hartland Quay	Pass	Pass
Westward Ho!	Pass	Pass
Instow	Fail	Fail
Saunton Sands	Pass	Pass
Croyde Bay	Pass	Pass
Woolacombe	Pass	Pass
Ilfracombe	Fail	Fail
Combe Martin	Pass	Fail
Lynmouth	Fail	Fail
Wessex Water Authority (Bristol Channel)		
Porlock Weir	Pass	Pass
Minehead Terminus	Fail	Fail
Dunster North West	Fail	Fail
Blue Anchor West	Pass	Pass
Burnham Jetty	Fail	Pass
Berrow	Pass	Pass
Brean	Pass	Pass
Weston-super-mare Uphill Slipway	Pass	Pass
Weston-super-mare Grand Pier	Fail	Fail
Weston-super-mare Sand Bay	Pass	Pass
Clevedon Swimming Pool	Fail	Fail
North West Water Authority		
Dove Point, Meols	Pass	Fail
Pasture Road, Moreton	Pass	Pass
New Brighton	Pass	Fail
Formby	Pass	Pass
Ainsdale	Pass	Fail
Southport	Fail	Fail
St Annes	Fail	Fail
Blackpool (Squires Gate—South Shore)	Fail	Fail
Blackpool (South Shore—Central Pier)	Fail	Fail
Blackpool (Central Pier—North Shore)	Fail	Fail
Blackpool (North Shore—Cleveleys)	Fail	Fail
Cleveleys	Fail	Fail
Fleetwood	Fail	Fail
Heysham—Half Moon Bay	Fail	Fail
Morecambe (West End Pool—Sandylands	Fail	Fail
Morecambe (WEP—Leisure Park)	Fail	Fail
Morecambe (Town Hall—Leisure Park)	Fail	Fail
Morecambe (Bare Pool—TH Slipway)	Fail	Fail
Bardsea	Fail	Fail
Walney Island Biggar Bank	Pass	Pass
Walney Island Sandy Gap	Pass	Pass
Walney Island West Shore	Pass	Fail
Roanhead	Pass	Fail
Askam-in-Furness	Fail	Fail
Haverigg	Fail	Fail
Silecroft	Pass	Fail
Seascale	Fail	Fail
St Bees	Fail	Fail
Allonby	Fail	Fail
Silloth	Fail	Fail
Welsh Water Authority		
Jacksons Bay, Barry	Fail	Fail
Whitmore Bay, Barry	Fail	Fail
Cold Knap, Barry	Fail	Fail
Southerndown	Pass	Fail
Trecco Bay, Porthcawl	Fail	Fail
Sandy Bay, Porthcawl	Fail	Fail
Rest Bay, Porthcawl	Pass	Fail
Aberafan	Pass	Fail
Swansea Bay	Fail	Fail
Bracelet Bay	Pass	Pass
Limeslade Bay	Fail	Fail
Langland Bay	Pass	Fail
Caswell Bay	Fail	Pass
Oxwich Bay	Pass	Pass
Port Eynon Bay	Pass	Pass
Rhossili	Pass	Fail
Pembrey	Pass	Pass
Pendine	Pass	Pass
Amroth	Fail	Fail
Saundersfoot	Fail	Pass
Tenby, North	Fail	Pass
Tenby, South	Pass	Fail
Broadhaven	Pass	Fail
Newgale	Pass	Fail
Whitesands	Pass	Pass
Newport	Pass	Pass
Newquay	Pass	Pass
Aberystwyth, South	Fail	Fail
Aberystwyth, North	Pass	Pass
Borth	Pass	Pass
Tywyn	Pass	Fail
Fairbourne	Pass	Pass
Barmouth	Pass	Pass
Llandanwg	Pass	Pass
Harlech	Pass	Pass
Morfa Bychan	Fail	Fail
Criccieth	Fail	Pass
Pwllheli	Pass	Pass

	1987 Result	1986 Result
Abersoch	Pass	Pass
Trearddur Bay	Fail	Fail
Benllech	Fail	Pass
Llandudno, West Shore	Fail	Fail
Llandudno, North	Pass	Pass
Colwyn Bay	Pass	Pass
Kinmel Bay	Fail	Fail
Rhyl	Fail	Fail
Prestatyn	Pass	Fail
Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland		
Magilligan	Pass	No survey
Castlerock	Pass	No survey
Portstewart	Pass	Pass
Portrush	Pass	Pass
Ballycastle	Fail	No survey
Browns Bay	Pass	No survey
Helens Bay	Pass	No survey
Crawfordsburn	Pass	No survey
Ballyholme	Fail	Fail
Groomsport	Pass	Pass
Millisle	Pass	No survey
Tyrella	Pass	No survey
Newcastle	Fail	Fail
Cranfield	Pass	No survey

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has been in contact with any international human rights organisations in order to ascertain the current situation of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories during the period of restrictions on journalists' freedom of movement and reporting.

Mr. Mellor: We maintain contacts with a number of bodies, including human rights organisations, who monitor developments in the occupied territories.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli occupied territories.

Mr. Mellor: Unacceptable actions by the Israeli military and settlers are exacerbating the violence in the West Bank and Gaza. The status quo, characterised by violence and repression, offers no way forward. We urge all concerned to join in the search for a political settlement.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Israeli Government on the situation in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We and our European partners regularly make clear to the Israeli authorities our concern at many aspects of the situation in the occupied territories.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have made or intend to make any representations to the Israeli Government about the closure of Palestinian academic institutions on the West Bank and Gaza; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. We have made regular representations to the Israelis about collective punishments, including the closure of educational institutions.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the Israeli Government in respect of the difficulties Palestinian farmers have had in exporting agricultural produce to the European Community.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. We have repeatedly stressed to the Israeli Government the importance that we attach to the full implementation of the EC's measures to allow Palestinians in the occupied territories to export direct to the EC, in accordance with the Israeli Government's undertaking of 7 December 1987. Most recently we were fully associated with the representations which the Presidency and Commission made on this subject to Mr. Peres on 31 March.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Israeli Government to allow the population of the occupied territories to hold free elections to choose their representatives at any future peace conference.

Mr. Mellor: Elections in the occupied territories are foreseen in the current United States peace proposals, to which we hope Israel will respond constructively.

Swaziland

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the implications of Swaziland's departure from the Rand monetary agreement and participation in the tripatrite monetary area agreement.

Mr. Mellor: The Rand monetary area agreement was renogotiated in April 1986 and became the common monetary area agreement or Tripartite monetary agreement. Under the terms of the new agreement Swaziland has been free to conduct an independent exchange rate policy. In practice, however, she has not felt the need to pursue such a policy and the Swazi currency has remained pegged at par with the rand. The new agreement also frees Swaziland from the need to place rand holdings in a special account in South Africa against the issue of Swazi currency notes and coins. This gives Swaziland flexibility in the management of foreign reserves and in the control of monetary policy.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy on the maintenance of stability in southern Africa of the Republic of South Africa's policy towards Swaziland.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to urge South Africa to co-operate peacefully with all its neighbours and to refrain from the use of force.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to, or received from, the Swaziland Government with regard to Swaziland's relations with the Republic of South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Palestinian Liberation Organisation

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations

Her Majesty's Government have made to the United States Government about the closure of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation office in Washington DC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek a meeting with representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation to seek clarification of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's position regarding participation in any peace conference; and if he will take such an opportunity to further British-Arab understanding of the Palestine problem.

Mr. Mellor: No. My right hon. and learned Friend does not propose to meet PLO leaders as long as their policy remains ambiguous on renunciation of the use of violence, acceptance of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and recognition of Israel's right to secure existence.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the United States Government about the closure of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation observer office at the United Nations.

Mr. Mellor: We and our European partners have on several occasions made clear to the United States Administration our view that the PLO observer mission to the United Nations should be allowed to remain open.

US-USSR Naval Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his NATO allies on the conditions considered necessary for acceptance of the proposal made by Fleet Admiral Vladimir Chesnavia, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, that the Soviet Union and the United States cut their naval forces in the Mediterranean to 15 warships and 10 support vessels for each side; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There have so far been no discussions within the Alliance about this proposal.

Fiji Ambassador

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *30*, what information he has as to by whom the credentials of the ambassador of Fiji expected shortly in this country are to be signed.

Mr. Eggar: None. It is normal practice for ambassadors to present to Her Majesty a Letter of Credence signed by their Head of State.

South Africa (Imports Ban)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the African countries which enforce an import ban on South African goods.

Mr. Mellor: A number of African countries have undertaken to impose import bans on certain South African goods. Details of how such bans have been implemented are not available.

"Death on the Rock"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what outside advice was obtained by Her Majesty's Government in relation to the decision not to ask for an injunction against the Thames Television programme "Death on the Rock".

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons his Department denied the request of Thames Television for information in relation to the Gibraltar killings.

Mr. Mellor: The inquest will be the proper place to provide information relating to the deaths of the terrorists.

Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in implementating the Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign Compensation Commission has now completed the determination and evaluation of claims against the Czech fund. It is hope to make a payout of 100 per cent. of the assessed value of claims to all successful claimants by the end of May. This will exhaust the balance in the Czech fund of approximately £4 million on the assumption that all applicants accept payment.

Intergovernmental Organisations

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list in the *Official Report* the intergovernmental organisations, excluding the European Communities, of which the United Kingdom is a member, the amount of the United Kingdom's annual contribution to each organisation, the percentage of each organisation's budget which this represents and which Government Department accounts for each contribution.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 29 April 1988, c. 312]:* The Foreign and Commonwealth Office holds no complete record of the intergovernmental organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member. The 1988-89 provision and United Kingdom percentage contribution to the organisations for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office pays the British subscriptions are set out in the following table:

Organisation	*1988-89 Provision £000*	*United Kingdom Percentage Contribution*
Subscriptions Paid from Class II, Vote 2, Other External Relations		
UN Regular Budget	21,929	4·860
Commonwealth Secretariat	2,123	30·000

Organisation	1988-89 Provision £000	United Kingdom Percentage Contribution
Council of Europe: General Expenses	7,149	16·710
Council of Europe: Buildings	361	17·700
Council of Europe: European Youth Foundation	181	18·500
Western European Union	1,409	20·000
Organisation of Economic Co-operation & Development	4,442	6·930
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: Civil Budget	12,833	18·820
NATO: International Staff Secretariat	144	19·990
South Pacific Commission	330	12·176
Commonwealth Foundation	483	30·000
Co-ordinating Committee, Paris	109	10·250
International Institute for the Unification of Private Law	48	8·430
International Exhibitions Bureau	7	5·210
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	2	4·430
Permanent Court of Arbitration	7	6·660
Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources	19	4·940
Subscriptions Paid from Class II, Vote 5, Overseas Aid		
International Development Association	168,900	[1]6·700
International Finance Corporation	3,526	[2]6·960
Asian Development Bank: Capital Subscription	703	[2]2·250
Asian Development Fund	12,500	[3]3·800
African Development Bank: Captial Subscription	1,541	[2]1·390
African Development Fund	8,500	[1]3·030
Inter-American Development Bank: Capital Subscription	1,796	[2]0·980
Fund for Special Operations	7,842	[1]3·460
Caribbean Development Bank: Capital Subscription	334	[2]12·900
Special Development Fund	1,618	[1]12·650
International Fund for Agricultural Development	4,992	[3]4·790
Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency	—	[4]—
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Capital Subscription	—	[5]—
UN Development Programme (UNDP)	[6]13,000	n/a
UN Children's Fund	7,500	n/a
Food and Agricultural Organisation	8,424	[7]5·830
UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)	1,624	[7]4·820
UN Education and Training Programme for Southern Africa	50	n/a
UN Development Fund for Women	50	n/a
UNIDO Industrial Development Fund	600	n/a
International Atomic Energy Agency	500	n/a
UN Centre for Human Settlements	70	n/a
Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-Operation	7,500	30·000
Commonwealth Youth Programme	465	30·000
Commonwealth Media Development Fund	150	n/a
Commonwealth Secretariat—Nassau Fellowship	50	n/a
Commonwealth Science Council	159	29·000
UN Fund for Population Activities	5,250	n/a
International Planned Parenthood Federation	6,750	n/a
World Health Organisation (WHO): Special Programme for Prevention and Control of AIDS	6,000	n/a
WHO Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction	2,200	n/a
WHO Onchocerciasis Control Programme	750	n/a
UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases	650	n/a
WHO Action Programme on Essential Drugs and Vaccines	450	n/a
WHO Diarrhoeal Disease Control Programme	350	n/a
International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research	150	n/a
Pan American Health Organisation: Caribbean Epidemiology Centre	75	n/a
WHO Cold Chain Support Unit	64	n/a
Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)	226	6·950
International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Rome	69	n/a
UN High Commissioner for Refugees	3,500	1·670
UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	5,250	4·570

[1] Share of last approved replenishment.
[2] Share of capital stock.
[3] Share of the OECD contributors' total.
[4] £2·8 million approx. being 4·86 per cent. of total subscription.
[5] A General Capital Increase is expected to be approved shortly by the Bank's Governors. The United Kingdom intends to subscribe, subject to Parliamentary approval; our share will be 4·955 per cent.
[6] Total for 1988 £24·5 million.
[7] Assessed contribution level.
n/a = 1988 budget not yet available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Finance Ministers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts from European Community countries; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave on 22 April, at column *580*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith).

Tax and Prices Index

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in the tax and prices index in the 12 months to March.

Mr. Lilley: In the 12 months to March 1988 the tax and prices index rose by 1·6 per cent.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

5. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest position on monetary compensatory amounts in the intensive livestock sector.

Mr. MacGregor: In the price fixing I am seeking to reduce MCAs for all commodity sectors, and to abolish them in the pigmeat sector, on which there are separate technical issues.

12. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of negative monetary compensatory amounts faced by the pigmeat sector; and what it was six months ago.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom MCA for pigmeat currently stands at −4·9 per cent. as compared to −10·9 per cent. at the beginning of November 1987.

Sheepmeat

13. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current position on the implementation of a sheepmeat stabiliser.

23. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the position on the introduction of a stabiliser to the sheepmeat regime.

25. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been taken to introduce a stabiliser mechanism into sheepmeat support.

Mr. MacGregor: Following European Council decisions the Community has agreed on a stabiliser for the sheepmeat sector based on maximum guaranteed quantities of 18·1 million ewes for Great Britain and 45·3 million ewes for the rest of the European Community, including Northern Ireland, which are the latest available figures. Sheepmeat support prices will be reduced for the 1988 marketing year from 23 May by the extent to which the maximum guaranteed quantities are exceeded, with separate calculations for Great Britain and the European Community-11 plus Northern Ireland so long as we operate variable premium.

A 1 per cent. overrun will trigger a 1 per cent. price cut. On the basis of Commission estimates of ewe flock sizes in 1988, we expect a 3 per cent. cut in Great Britain prices.

45. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement regarding the latest developments in the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson). I expect discussions on the Commission's proposals for reform of the Community's sheepmeat regime to take place after the price-fixing proposals have been agreed.

Food Aid

18. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to implement the European Community free food scheme.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on developing a scheme for free food for the needy.

Mr. Gummer: As announced on 21 April, butter and beef are being allocated to 127 charitable organisations and local authorities up to the limit of £10·4 million made available to us by the Commission for 1988. The timing and method of distribution to the needy are matters for the individual organisations concerned.

Breeding Ewes

21. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current number of breeding ewes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: From the December 1987 census returns, the figure is put at 19·139 million.

Single European Market

17. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to reduce trade barriers in the food industry in preparation for the single European market.

Mr. Gummer: The European Commission proposed a detailed legislative programme for food law in its 1985 White Paper "Completing the Internal Market." A number of measures are already under discussion in the Council, of which the most important relate to food additives and labelling, foods for particular nutritional uses and food contact materials. We are working for early agreement on these. A number of further proposals remain to be tabled by the Commission.

22. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made by the food industry in anticipation of unrestricted trade within the European Community from 1992.

Mr. Gummer: I know that the industry is aware of the challenge posed by the creation of a single market by the end of 1992 and is preparing itself in a variety of ways to take advantage of the new opportunities that are opening up. I intend to do everything I can do to encourage it to do so.

41. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the implications for United Kingdom agriculture of the creation of a single European Community market in 1992.

Mr. MacGregor: In common with other sectors of the United Kingdom economy, agriculture should stand to benefit from the opportunities created by the completion of a single market of 320 million people, provided that we remain competitive and conscious of the marketing opportunities for selling the output of the British agriculture and food industries. A key factor will be that monetary compensatory amounts represent an important obstacle to a single market. I therefore strongly support the Commission's aim of abolishing them by the end of 1992.

Apple and Pear Development Council

24. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Apple and Pear Council; and what they discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary last met the chairman of the

Apple and Pear Development Council on 3 May, when she attended a meeting of the council. At the meeting, the council's proposed advertising plans for 1988-89 were discussed.

Pig Farmers

26. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he proposes to take to help overcome the problems facing United Kingdom pig farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) earlier today.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had from pig farmers on monetary compensatory amounts and on the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a substantial number of representations on this subject. I have made clear in the Agriculture Council my commitment to fight for the abolition of our MCAs in the pigmeat sector.

Bovine Somatotrophin

27. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the trials at present being conducted, any consideration has been given to whether bovine somatotrophin products could be labelled as such at the point of sale.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Milk from cows involved in the trials is identical over the lactation to that from untreated cows. It is not necessary to treat it differently from other milk.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from consumer organisations concerning the use of bovine somatotrophin in the dairy herd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received a considerable number of letters from both consumer organisations and individuals who are generally opposed to the use of BST. The product was fully assessed for safety before the current trials were authorised. I see no justification for any ban on its use.

38. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on criteria for the approval of farms for the bovine somatotrophin trial in the British dairy industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: That is a matter for the holder of the animal test certificate and the farmer concerned.

Green Pound

28. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the value of the green pound.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a number of representations on this subject. The majority have sought a devaluation for pigmeat. Some have concerned all or a number of sectors and supported a measure of devaluation this year. Consumers' representatives have opposed devaluation.

Farm Diversification Scheme

29. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to encourage farmers to diversify their activities.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope).

Dairy Industry

30. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will be meeting the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend the Minister and I have regular contacts with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss various issues affecting the dairy industry.

Sea Fish Industry Authority

31. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes any increase in funding for the Sea Fish Industry Authority for grant assistance towards new vessels.

Mr. Gummer: No.

39. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Sea Fish Industry Authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the Sea Fish Industry Authority last December and I met him informally in April, when a number of matters concerning the activities of the authority were discussed.

Cod Fishing Ban

33. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the recent cod fishing ban from Cornish fishermen; and what was his response.

Mr. Gummer: I have not received any such representations.

Cereals

34. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will remove oats from the cereal co-responsibility scheme.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The coverage of the cereals co-responsibility levy is a matter for the Agriculture Council. We fully appreciate the arguments for exempting oats from the levy and my right hon. Friend is continuing to argue for this in the current price-fixing negotiations.

Agricultural Land Classification

35. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received following the publication of his consultation document on agricultural land classification in February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The closing date for responses to the consultation document was 25 April and we have received

a number of comments of a technical nature. I am looking at these carefully and will be making a statement in due course.

Horticultural Development Council

36. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of the Horticultural Development Council.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Full details of the progress made by the Horticultural Development Council in its first 15 months are given in its first annual report, which was laid before the House on 28 April 1988.

Whales

32. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken to improve the conservation of whales.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis).

37. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the catching of whales for scientific purposes.

Mr. Gummer: It is the firm view of the Government that all proposals for the taking of whales for research purposes should be thoroughly examined by the scientific committee of the International Whaling Commission, which is the body responsible for the conservation of whale stocks. Only when this body is fully satisfied that the research programme will not endanger the whale stocks concerned, has valid objectives and is properly designed to achieve those objectives, and that these cannot be obtained through benign methods, should such research be undertaken.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the protection of whales from hunting.

Mr. Gummer: In 1985 the International Whaling Commission (IWC) introduced a moratorium on all commercial whaling operations. The United Kingdom has been a leader in this as in other subsequent efforts to stop countries using questionable scientific arguments in order to continue whaling. We shall continue with these efforts in order to ensure the proper conservation of all whale species.

Fish Farms (Pollution)

40. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the issue of pollution from fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received no recent representations about pollution from fish farms.

Radioactivity (Farming Losses)

42. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further steps the Government are taking to ensure that farmers do not continue to lose income due to effects of Chernobyl fall out in north Wales, northern England and Scotland.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Following detailed discussions with the farmers unions we introduced four separate compensation schemes to help those sheep producers whose enterprises were affected by the restrictions introduced following the Chernobyl incident. Two of these schemes are still operating. One provides full compensation for any market price losses on sheep that have to be marked on their release from the remaining restricted areas: the second offers a payment of £1·30 per head for each sheep monitored and moved out of the restricted area. Both schemes will continue so long as the movement and slaughter restrictions apply.

Research and Development

43. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the Barnes review of agricultural research and development.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 25 April, at column *42*.

NFU (Derbyshire Branch)

44. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to meet the Derbyshire branch of the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Gummer: I have visited the branch on two occasions and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary plans to visit the Derbyshire branch of the National Farmers Union on 14 September 1988.

Horses

46. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to restore the role of the horse as an agricultural animal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Traditionally, those horses used in agricultural operations have always been regarded as agricultural animals. It follows that there has been no change in their status, so the question of restoring their role does not arise. I am, however, anxious that horses and ponies used for other purposes should play a full part in revitalising the rural economy and I hope that advantage will be taken of the inclusion of pony trekking and livery in the list of activities qualifying for grant under the farm diversification scheme. There is little doubt that opportunities exist for the development of businesses associated with the breeding, rearing and keeping of horses in rural areas. But, as with other small rural businesses, this calls for a spirit of enthusiasm, dedication and enterprise.

Sheep Farming

47. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of the sheep farming sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The sheep sector is buoyant, returns are good and exports are encouraging.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to encourage the recent trend towards sheep farming in the lowland areas of Britain.

Mr. MacGregor: Farmers must make their own decisions about sheep farming in the context of the sheepmeat regime.

Aerosols

48. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans to ban the use of aerosols in his Department's buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. I am not aware of any such plans.

Nuclear Waste

49. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many separate sets of permission he has granted in the past 10 years for the dumping of sewage sludge, capital spoil or other materials such as low-level waste products from nuclear plants in the Bristol Channel within 20 miles of the north Devon coastline.

Mr. Gummer: Licences under the Dumping at Sea Act 1974 and its successor legislation, the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, have been issued from 1978 to date in the area specified as follows:

a. Two licences, renewed annually, for disposal of sewage sludge;
b. Three licences, each for one year, for disposal of dredged spoil arising from new works;
c. Seven licences, each for one year, and one renewed for a total of four years, for disposal of spoil arising from maintenance dredging;
d. 12 licences for disposal of liquid industrial waste; most were renewed for more than one year; all have now terminated.

Five disposal sites have been approved over the period.

Authorisations have been granted jointly with the Secretary of State for the Environment under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for the discharge by pipeline of low-level liquid radioactive waste into the Bristol channel from the Hinkley Point nuclear power stations and from Amersham International plc.

Trade Barriers (Removal)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the benefits for Britain's food industry of the removal of trade barriers within Europe in 1992.

Mr. Gummer: A wide range of benefits are likely to flow from free access to a single market of 320 million people by the end of 1992, though some of these will, of course, arise from proposals still under consideration. I am sure that the industry itself will be making a detailed assessment of the prospective benefits.

Channel Islands (Fishing Rights)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on negotiations relating to the Channel Islands with particular regard to the right of Channel Islands — registered fishing vessels to operate within *(a)* British waters, and *(b)* EEC waters.

Mr. Gummer: There are no negotiations to change the rights of such vessels.

Lowestoft Fishermen

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prospects for Lowestoft inshore fishermen for the rest of the current year in the light of the quota and licensing restrictions on the industry.

Mr. Gummer: Provisional figures for 1987 show a 39 per cent. increase in the value of landings of all species compared with 1986, including a corresponding increase of 36 per cent. for cod. Data for the first two months of 1988 show a 29 per cent. increase for all species over the same period last year, including a 6 per cent. increase for cod.

The figures show that our quota management and restrictive licensing systems are working well for the Lowestoft inshore fleet.

Cod and Plaice

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had on total allowable catches for cod and plaice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have had no recent representations on total allowable catches for cod and plaice in the North sea or off the west of Scotland. Fishermen's representatives have, however, been in touch with my officials to express their concern at the level of the precautionary total allowable catch for Channel cod (ICES areas VII excluding VIIa, VIII, IX and X). In consultation with the area VII industry advisory committee the fishery was closed on 11 April in the light of catch statistics up to that date.

The ICES advisory committee on fisheries management meets next month and we shall press for a review of the total allowable catch for any stock of importance to the United Kingdom should the committee's scientific assessment indicate that there is any scope to do so.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had from dairy farmers about their industry in general and European competition in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I receive frequent representations from dairy farmers about their industry. Some are concerned about the prospect of imports of pasteurised milk, but there is increasing confidence that we can compete effectively and that the consumer will continue to favour the freshness and quality of the domestic product.

Cereal Farmers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had from cereal farmers about their industry in general and European competition in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I receive frequent representations from cereal farmers on a wide range of issues, including their competitive position.

Price Fixing

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on what recent discussions he has held with his counterparts in the European Community in respect of the annual price fixing for agricultural commodities.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission's proposals relating to cereals, fruit and vegetables, sugar, beef and agrimonetary matters were discussed at the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting on 18-19 April.

Chernobyl Nuclear Accident (Effects)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take in the light of the report on his Department's response to the effects of the Chernobyl disaster by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government have already taken action to reflect the experience gained as a result of the Chernobyl accident, through the new national response plan announced on 30 June 1987. As hon. Members will be aware, the Agriculture Committee of this House is currently examining the Government's response to the accident in the light of detailed evidence submitted by my Ministry, amongst others. I shall give careful consideration to the Committee's report.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of current agricultural research and development is funded by the industry; and what is his estimate for 1988-89.

Mr. MacGregor: Our best estimate is that industry funds about two thirds of the country's total agricultural R and D effort. But many companies do not disclose details of their spending and there are also problems in assessing the contribution of multinationals to the total United Kingdom picture.

TRANSPORT

Settle-Carlisle Railway Line

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to indicate his policy towards acceptance of the conditions laid down by the contributing local authorities to the Settle-Carlisle railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. My right hon. Friend will indicate his views on this when he announces his conclusions on the future of the line generally.

Icelandair Boeing 727

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which an undercarriage door fell off an Icelandair Boeing 727 and landed in a garden in Southbourne close, Pinner, on 2 May.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority has said that a main undercarriage door fell from an Icelandair Boeing 727 aircraft approaching Heathrow when the door-to-fuselage hinge failed. The airworthiness of Icelandair aircraft is a matter for the authorities in Iceland, who will be responsible for taking any necessary safety action. Section 76(2) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 provides for the recovery of damages in respect of any material loss or damage caused by an article falling from an aircraft.

Cyclists

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has about the dangers caused by irresponsible behaviour by pedal cyclists to themselves and to other road users; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Pedal cyclists are one of the most vulnerable road user groups. In 1986, 271 pedal cyclists were killed and a further 25,858 were injured. Although this is less than in 1985, the casualty rate per mile travelled worsened in 1986.

The Department and local highway authorities work hard to try to reduce these appalling casualties. Many of the accidents to cyclists are caused by other road users.

There is scope for cyclists to do more to help themselves, for example, by wearing conspicuity aids and safety helmets.

The majority of cyclists are sensible law-abiding citizens. There are some who seem to think they are above the law. For instance, there is no excuse for not using lights at night, nor for riding on the pavement or in pedestrian-only areas, which causes particular distress to many elderly and disabled persons.

I am concerned at cyclists ignoring traffic signals and directions. These cyclists should realise that such irresponsible behaviour can increase significantly their chances of being involved in an accident. Cyclists are not above the law. The police can and do take action to prosecute.

Parents have a particular responsibility to ensure that their children know just how dangerous roads can be if not treated with respect. They should encourage their children to take proper training, through the excellent schemes run by RoSPA. The local road safety officer can give advice.

Older cyclists can obtain help and advice on a wide range of issues, including defensive riding techniques and machine maintenance, by joining cycle clubs locally, or by subscribing to a national organisation like the Cyclists' Touring Club.

Many cycling accidents are caused by other road users. The Highway Code now includes much more advice aimed at ensuring that motorists are more aware of cyclists and the problems they face. As part of our current road safety publicity programme, we are also distributing relevant material to local authority road safety officers.

Air Services

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to encourage the development of air services from the regional airports of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not our policy to subsidise air services. We will continue to approve capital allocations to increase regional airport capacity where this is justified. In international negotiations over traffic rights we aim to facilitate air services between regional airports and overseas, provided British interests are safeguarded. In particular, the EC air transport "package", which came

into force on 1 January, gives airlines the automatic right to provide services between any United Kingdom regional airport and most major airports in the Community.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to support financial and other links between British and European airlines where this reflects EEC policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The establishment of financial and other links between British and European airlines is a commercial matter for the airlines themselves. We would be involved only if advised by the CAA that such a link would result in a British airline becoming foreign controlled. We would treat each case on its merits.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Pigs

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the state of the pig industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The pig industry in Northern Ireland, in common with the remainder of the United Kingdom and the European Community, is going through a difficult period due to an over-supply of pigs and poor prices for pigmeat.

To help ease the situation an aids to private storage scheme was introduced throughout the Community in February 1988 to remove surplus pigmeat from the market. To date just over 200 tonnes have been put into store in Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, the level of monetary compensatory amount paid on bacon exported to the United Kingdom has, due to the increasing strength of sterling, fallen from 15·8 per cent. in October 1987 to 6·1 per cent. at the end of April 1988.

Road Repairs

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to repair the footway and roadway between the Millifle end of Donaghadee and the bends at Croaghpatrick; when will this road towards Ballyvester be realigned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has no proposals at present to improve any of these roads as their condition is not considered to justify such works.

Potatoes

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the state of the seed potato and ware potato industry.

Mr. Viggers: Total shipments of seed potatoes from the 1987 crop are in excess of 50,000 tonnes compared with just over 52,000 tonnes at the corresponding time from the 1986 crop. This has been achieved in spite of a 3 per cent. fall in the area of seed potatoes planted in 1987 and some problems with seed exported.

Ware potato prices for the 1987 crop have been lower than for the 1986 crop, but the cumulative average grower's price at 15 April was £62·06 per tonne. This is well in excess of the target price of £46 per tonne set under the market support arrangements. Prices have been easing back over recent weeks, but this has had only a marginal effect on the cumulative average grower's price for the crop.

Retail Prices Index (Error)

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made for the allocation of money to charities in Northern Ireland in respect of the retail prices index understatement on social security benefits and centrally administered pensions.

Mr. Needham: The balance remaining out of the savings attributable to the RPI error in the social security uprating in Northern Ireland, after allowing for the compensatory payments to individual beneficiaries, is about £250,000. This will be made available to voluntary organisations, and particularly to those whose work would benefit the groups affected by the error.

To ensure as wide and as equitable a distribution as possible, I have decided that the money should be available to regional voluntary organisations and to local groups. The Department of Health and Social Services will administer part of the new fund, in the form of grants to individual regional bodies for specific purposes, and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, which has a well-proven track record in this field, will distribute the balance in the form of grants to more localised community projects serving the same target groups.

The Department of Health and Social Services will now be inviting applications for a share of the available money, and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust will be announcing details of how local groups should apply.

The savings accruing to the superannuation schemes for Northern Ireland civil servants, teachers and health and personal social services staff amount to about £158,000. In the case of the Civil Service, payments totalling £52,500 were made by the Department of Finance and Personnel to the Civil Service retirement fellowship, the Civil Service benevolent fund and the Northern Ireland Civil Service sports association in the financial year 1987-88. In the case of retired teachers and health and personal social services staff consideration is being given to identifying the most appropriate arrangements for distributing the sums involved for the benefit of the groups of staff concerned.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints have been made against police officers in each of the Royal Ulster Constabulary sub-divisions controlled from the divisional headquarters at Strand road, Londonderry in each of the last five years; what was the result of the cases in each of those sub-divisions; and how often more than one complaint was made against the same officer and with what result.

Mr. Stanley: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, information about complaints in the police division controlled from Strand road, Londonderry in each of the past five years is as follows:

Complaints against the police—RUC "N" division

Complaints	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Received	207	255	365	336	265
Finalised	196	243	350	294	95
Substantiated	2	1	3	5	2
Not substantiated	58	51	101	87	18
Withdrawn by complainant	102	127	125	97	46
Non co-operation by complainant	33	64	117	104	28
Not proceeded with	1	0	4	1	1

Job Seekers (Travel to London)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for the last 12 months for which figures are available (a) how many persons from Northern Ireland have received assistance from public funds to travel to London to seek work, and (b) how many families and individuals from Northern Ireland have had to be given accommodation in London at public expense while seeking work in London; what is the average period such accommodation was occupied; and what was the cost.

Mr. Viggers: Under the travel-to-interview scheme the Department of Economic Development assisted a total of 275 people to travel to interviews in London during the 12 months ended 31 March 1988.

Under the supplementary benefit scheme, which ceased on 11 April, help was available in limited circumstances to people on supplementary benefit to enable them to find work within the United Kingdom provided they did not qualify for assistance under the travel-to-interview scheme. Information is not held centrally about the numbers of persons assisted and could be obtained only at disaproportionate cost.

Information is not available about the numbers of families or individuals from Northern Ireland who had to be given accommodation in London at public expense while seeking work there.

Brussels (Ministerial Visit)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the official visit to Brussels by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers).

Mr. Viggers: I visited Brussels on 20 and 21 April, where I had discussions with the Commissioner for Regional Policy and senior officials of the Commission. Our discussions covered Northern Ireland economic issues, ways in which the Province might benefit to an increased extent from the reformed structural funds, the pathfinder initiative, our approach to preparing Northern Ireland for the completion of the single European market by 1992 and the European enterprise conference scheduled to be held in Northern Ireland from 28 September to 1 October next.

I was encouraged by the Commission's recognition of the Province's particular problems and its willingness to be as flexible as possible in assisting future developments.

Irish Institute for European Affairs

Sir Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the extent of the Northern Ireland participation in the Irish Institute for European Affairs in Leuven; what is the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Construction trainees from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland participated in the renovation of the institute's buildings. Since 1985 the Department of Economic Development and AnCO (the industrial training authority in the Republic) have jointly sponsored a series of European export marketing programmes training unemployed graduates to become export marketing managers. In addition, the institute is used for a variety of seminars, conferences, public lectures and business receptions by both the private and public sectors.

The cost of the institute to Northern Ireland funds in the year ended 31 March 1988 was £90,255, including annual subvention of £20,000 payable by the Department of Economic Development over a period of three years, matching a corresponding sum paid by the authorities in the Republic of Ireland.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 May 1988

WALES

Rating Reform

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate, assuming the full replacement of rates by the community charge, and the implementation of the Local Government Finance Bill for non-domestic rates and grant in 1988-89 *(a)* for Wales as a whole, *(b)* for each class of local authorities (including community councils), and *(c)* for each county and district authority area the following items in thousands of pounds: (i) expenditure, (ii) revenue support grant (where appropriate), (iii) share of non-domestic rate pool (where appropriate), (iv) community contribution and (v) adult population together with (vi) the community charge for each county and district authority, showing separately for each district area the average community council charge and (vii) the total community charge; and what is the average rate per adult for 1988-89 in each district area.

Mr. Grist: Illustrative figures are given in the table. These figures are provisional, and will be updated when better information is received from all local authorities. No allowance has been made for the transitional safety-net arrangements. Average rate bills per adult are on a basis comparable with the community charge figures and exclude any use of balances. The calculations are based on present needs assessments which are under review. The community contribution for community councils is equal to their expenditure.

Summary of impact of Local Government Finance Bill for non-domestic rates and grant in Wales 1988-89

	District or county expenditure	*Total community council expenditure*	*Revenue support grant*	*Proceeds from non-domestic rate pool*	*Community contribution*	*Adult population*	*Community charge*				
							County element	*District element*	*Average community council element*	*Total*	*Average rate bill per adult*
	£ thousands	£ thousands	£ thousands	£ thousands	£ thousands	Thousands	£	£	£	£	£
1 Alyn and Deeside	5,238	355	3,046	1,538	655	53·9	123	12	7	141	176
2 Colwyn	4,678	6	2,467	1,161	1,050	40·7	123	26	0	149	198
3 Delyn	5,704	296	3,274	1,398	1,032	49·0	123	21	6	150	176
4 Glyndwr	3,100	97	1,464	893	743	31·3	123	24	3	149	155
5 Rhuddlan	5,681	168	3,960	1,238	482	43·4	123	11	4	138	170
6 Wrexham Maelor	10,012	560	5,516	2,457	2,039	86·1	123	24	7	153	162
7 Carmarthen	3,848	446	2,277	1,198	373	42·0	131	9	11	151	123
8 Ceredigion	4,467	346	2,963	1,415	89	49·6	131	2	7	140	136
9 Dinefwr	2,355	147	1,551	825	0	28·9	131	0	5	136	110
10 Llanelli	6,659	916	4,282	1,646	731	57·7	131	13	16	160	137
11 Preseli Pembrokeshire	4,818	242	3,282	1,524	12	53·4	131	0	5	136	126
12 South Pembrokeshire	3,277	258	2,448	865	0	30·3	131	0	9	140	152
13 Blaenau Gwent	9,497	76	5,741	1,695	2,061	59·4	120	35	1	156	116
14 Islwyn	7,448	0	4,325	1,427	1,697	50·0	120	34	0	154	127
15 Monmouth	5,571	271	2,661	1,695	1,215	59·4	120	20	5	145	167
16 Newport	13,408	100	7,793	2,799	2,816	98·1	120	29	1	150	185
17 Torfaen	8,430	268	4,582	1,955	1,893	68·5	120	28	4	151	154
18 Aberconwy	4,922	153	2,598	1,184	1,140	41·5	105	27	4	137	173
19 Arfon	5,170	187	3,013	1,158	999	40·6	105	25	5	135	129
20 Dwyfor	3,051	60	1,886	596	568	20·9	105	27	3	136	160
21 Meirionnydd	3,526	90	2,041	713	772	25·0	105	31	4	140	158
22 Ynys Mon	6,303	214	3,751	1,489	1,062	52·2	105	20	4	130	154
23 Cynon Valley	7,130	28	4,854	1,407	869	49·3	137	18	1	155	108
24 Merthyr Tydfil	7,549	30	4,959	1,267	1,323	44·4	137	30	1	168	124
25 Ogwr	11,815	195	6,358	2,905	2,553	101·8	137	25	2	164	151
26 Rhondda	10,260	0	7,430	1,695	1,135	59·4	137	19	0	156	85
27 Rhymney Valley	10,099	225	5,522	2,188	2,389	76·7	137	31	3	171	139
28 Taff Ely	7,750	456	4,366	2,017	1,367	70·7	137	19	6	163	145
29 Brecknock	3,131	238	1,794	902	435	31·6	112	14	8	134	131
30 Montgomeryshire	3,111	199	2,015	1,101	0	38·6	112	0	5	117	128
31 Radnor	1,489	43	860	479	150	16·8	112	9	3	124	135
32 Cardiff	24,827	59	19,793	6,066	0	212·6	110	0	0	110	179
33 Vale of Glamorgan	7,664	767	4,970	2,502	192	87·7	110	2	9	121	166
34 Port Talbot	5,842	3	3,115	1,110	1,617	38·9	164	42	0	205	154
35 Lliw Valley	4,752	242	2,625	1,335	791	46·8	164	17	5	186	142
36 Neath	4,820	348	3,158	1,421	241	49·8	164	5	7	175	154
37 Swansea	22,184	116	13,057	4,092	5,035	143·4	164	35	1	199	192
38 Clwyd	193,981	—	110,493	46,182	37,307	304·4	123	—	—	—	—
39 Dyfed	176,591	—	102,479	39,734	34,378	261·9	131	—	—	—	—
40 Gwent	219,702	—	128,617	50,885	40,200	335·4	120	—	—	—	—
41 Gwynedd	120,437	—	74,093	27,339	18,005	180·2	105	—	—	—	—
42 Mid Glamorgan	280,092	—	163,847	61,034	55,210	402·3	137	—	—	—	—
43 Powys	64,861	—	41,895	13,199	9,767	87·0	112	—	—	—	—
44 South Glamorgan	191,518	—	112,869	45,560	33,090	300·3	110	—	—	—	—
45 West Glamorgan	193,130	—	105,216	42,313	45,602	278·9	164	—	—	—	—
46 Districts	259,586	8,205	159,798	61,357	38,430	2,150·4	—	18	—	—	—
47 Total Counties	1,440,312	—	839,507	326,245	274,560	2,150·4	128	—	—	—	—
48 Total Wales	1,699,898	8,205	999,305	387,603	312,990	2,150·4	128	18	4	150	—

Monthly Accessions List

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department deposits copies of *(a)* the monthly accessions list, and *(b)* the annual publications list in (i) county libraries and (ii) libraries of the colleges of the University of Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Office library sends copies of its monthly accessions and annual publications lists to all county libraries in Wales and to the libraries of the colleges which constitute the University of Wales.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those primary schools in Gwent *(a)* which have classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction of first or second language pupils, *(b)* which have classes of first or second language pupils where some of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh, *(c)* where Welsh is taught as a second language but not used as a teaching medium, and *(d)* where no Welsh is taught.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Gwent schools with some classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction

Brynmawr, Infant School
Pengam C.P.
Pontnewynydd Junior and Infants
St. Dials Infants
Sofrydd Junior
High Cross Junior Mixed and Infants

Gwent schools with no teaching through the medium of Welsh

Alexandra Primary
Bolt Street Primary School
Clytha Junior and Infant School
Crindau Junior and Infant School
Durham Road Junior School
Durham Road Infant School
Eveswell Junior School
Eveswell Infant and Nursery School
Gaer Junior School
Gaer Infant School
Lliswerry Infant School
Maesglas CP School
Maindee Junior School
Maindee Infant School
Malpas Court Junior and Infant School
St. Andrew's Junior School
St. Andrew's Infant School
St. Woolos Junior and Infant School
Somerton Primary School
Tredegar Wharf CP School
Brynglas Junior Mixed and Infant School
St. Julians Junior School
St. Julians Infant School
Alway CP Junior School
Alway Infant School
Ringland Infant School
Glasllwch CP School
Milton Infant School
Milton Junior School
Ringland Junior School
Malpas Park Junior and Infant School
Millbrook Junior School
Monnow Infant School
Millbrook Infant School
Monnow Junior School
Lliswerry Junior School
Brynmawr CP Junior School
Clydach CP School
Darenfelen CP School
Gilwern CP School
Cefn Forest Junior
Fleu-de-Lis Junior Mixed and Infant
Dukestown Junior
Dukestown Infants
Glanhowy Junior and Infant
Sirhowy Infant
Deighton Primary School
Georgetown County Primary
Markham Primary
Argoed Junior Mixed and Infants
Rhiw Syr Dafydd Junior
Oakdale Infant
Blackwood Infants

Libanus Junior and Infant
Pontllanfraith Junior Mixed
Pontllanfraith Infants
Cwmfelinfach Primary School
Trinant Infants
Crumlin Junior and Infants
Pentwynmawr Junior and Infant School
Tynewydd Junior and Infants
Cwmcarn Junior and Infants School
Waunfawr Junior Infants and Nursery
Risca Town Church Primary
Danygraig Junior and Infants
Hillside Junior and Infants
Varteg Primary
Garndiffaith Primary
Victoria Junior and Infants
Pentwyn Junior and Infants
George Street Junior
Park Terrace Junior and Infants
Penygarn Infants
Greenlawn Junior
Pontymoile Primary
Griffithstown Infant School
Goytre Fawr Junior and Infants
Henllys Junior and Infants
Park Street Infants
Llanfoist Church Primary
Llangattock-Nigh-Usk Church Primary
Grosmont Junior Mixed and Infants
Llanover Junior and Infants
Brynderi Junior and Infants
Norton Cross Junior and Infants
Cross Ash Junior Mixed and Infants
Llangattock-Vibon-Avel Junior and Infants
Osbaston Infants
Overmonnow Infants
Mitchel Troy Church Primary
Wyesham Infants
Mathern Church Primary
Sudbrook Church Primary
Undy Church Primary
Rogiet Church Primary
Abertillery Church Primary School
Arael Primary
Blaenau Gwent Infants
Blaentillery Infants
Cwmtillery Junior
Queen Street Junior and Infants
Beaufort Hill Infants
Rassau Primary
Glyncoed Junior
Glyncoed Infant
Willowtown Infants

Briery Hill County Primary School
Waunlwyd Junior Mixed and Infants
Winchestown Infant
Nantyglo Junior and Infant
Garnfach Infant and Nursery
Cwmcelyn Infants
Blaina Junior
Blaina Infant
Croesyceiliog North Road Infants
Green Lane Junior Mixed
Kemeys Fawr Infants
Croesyceiliog Junior
Llanyrafon Primary
Maendy County Primary
Oakfield Primary
Pantside County Primary
Abergavenny Llwynu Infants
Langstone Primary
Pontnewydd County Primary Schoolary
Gelli Crug Infants
Garnlydan Primary
Pontygof Primary
Penllwyn Infant
Pembroke Road Infants

Blackwood Junior
Trinant Junior School
Brookfield Junior and Infants
Fairwater Junior
Fairwater Infants
Llanmartin County Primary
Penygarn Junior
Pontygarreg Primary
Ty Isaf Infants
Pembroke Junior
Sandy Lane Infants
St. Mary's Junior Mixed Caldicot
Ty Sign Junior
Marshfield Junior and Infants School
West End Infants
Coed Eva Infant
Coed Eva Junior Mixed
Penllwyn Junior
Govilon County Primary
Llanfihangel Crucorney County Primary
Ty-Sign Infants
Thornwell Primary
Lodge Hill Junior
Greenmeadow Primary
Coedcae Junior
Sorfrydd Infants
Cwm Junior and Infant School
Llwynu Junior
Bryn Junior and Infant
Cefn-Fforest Infants
Mount Pleasant Junior and Infants
Durand Junior and Infants
Llandogo County Primary
Abercarn Junior Mixed and Infants
Upper Cwmbran Infants
Bryngwyn Junior and Infants
Wyesham Junior
Harold Road Junior
Hollybush County Primary
Lodge Hill Infants
Cefn Wood County Primary
Beaufort Hill County Primary School
Willowtown Junior
New Inn Infant
George Street Infants
Griffithstown Junior
Raglan Junior
Croesonen Infants
Brynhyfryd Junior Infants and Nursery
Ty'r Graig County Primary
Duffryn Junior School
Woodlands Junior
Woodlands Infants
Duffryn Infant School
Ynysddu Junior and Infant School
Cwmffrwdoer Primary School
Shirenewton Junior and Infant School
Pentrepoeth County Primary School
Trellech County Primary School
Malpas CIW Junior School
Malpas Church CV Infant School
Ponthir CV Primary
Llantilio Pertholey CV
Llanfair Kilgeddin Junior and Infant CV
Llandewi Rhydderch CV
Overmonnow Junior School
St. Arvans Primary
Portskewett VC Infants
Raglan Infants
Llanellen CV Junior and Infants
Usk VC Infants and Junior School
Caerwent Infants
St. Peters CV Junior and Infants
Osbaston Junior
St. David's Romsan Catholic Junior and Infant School
St. Josephs Roman Catholic Primary School
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Junior School
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Infant School
St. Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School
St. Patricks Roman Catholic Primary School
St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Primary School
St. David Lewis Roman Catholic Primary School
Brynmawr RC School
St Mary's Brynmawr CIWVP Aided
Magor VA Primary
Caerleon Endowed Junior School
Caerleon Endowed Infants School
All Saints RC Primary School
St. Josephs RCP School
Abergavenny RC
St. Felix Blaenavon RC
St. Alban's RC Primary
Cwmbran RC Junior and Infants
Abersychan RC Junior and Infants
St. David's RC Junior and Infants Cumbran
Chepstow St Marys RC Primary

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those primary schools in South Glamorgan *(a)* which have classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction of first or second language pupils, *(b)* which have classes of first or second language pupils where some of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh, *(c)* where Welsh is taught as a second language but not used as a teaching medium, and *(d)* where no Welsh is taught.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

South Glamorgan Schools with some classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction.
Lansdowne Primary School
Ysgol Gymraeg Penarth
Ysgol Gymraeg St Ffransis
Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Baruc
Ysgol Iolo Morganwg
Ysgol Gymraeg Melin Grufydd
Ysgol—y—Wern
Ysgol Gymraeg Coed y Gof
Ysgol Bro Eirwg

South Glamorgan Schools with teaching through the medium of Welsh as a first or second language
Tonyrywen School
Eglwys Newydd Primary
Llanishen Fach CP School
Rhiwbeina Junior School
Rhiwbeina Infants School

South Glamorgan Schools with no teaching through the medium of Welsh
Millbank CP School
Adamsdown CP School
Albany Primary School
Allensbank Primary School
Baden Powell CP School
Birchgrove Primary School
Trelai CP School
Fairwater Primary School
Gabalfa Primary School
Gladstone CP School
Gladstone Infant and Nursery School
Grangetown Junior School
Grangetown CP School
Hawthorn Junior School
Hawthorn Infant School
Herbert Thompson Junior
Herbert Thompson Infants
Hywel DDA County Junior
Hywel DDA Infants and Nursery
Kitchener Primary School
Marlborough Junior School
Marlborough Road Infants
Moorland Primary School
Radnor Primary School
Rhydypenau Primary School
Roath Park CP School
Greenway Primary
Severn Junior School
Severn Infant and Nursery School
Stacey Primary School

Windsor Clive County Junior
Windsor Clive Infant and Nursery
Caerau Infant School
Peter Lea Primary
Cefn Onn CP School
Bryn Hafod Primary School
Cwrt-yr-Ala Junior School
Pen y Bryn Primary
Rumney Junior School
Rumney Infants and Nursery
Coed Glas Primary
Glan-yr-Afon Junior
Lakeside Primary School
Pentrebane CP School
Glan-yr-Afon Infants
Trowbridge Infants and Nursery
Mountstuart Primary
Eglwys Wen CP School
Llanedeyrn Primary School
Springwood CP School
Ninian Park Primary
Trowbridge Junior School
Viriamu Jones Primary

Coryton CP School
Glyncoed Infants School
Glyncoed Junior School
Bryn Celyn Junior School
Bryn Celyn Infants School
Albert CP School
Barry Island Primary
Cadoxton Junior School
Cadoxton Infants School
Cogan Primary School
Colcot CP School
Dinas Powys County Infants
Fairfield Primary
Gladstone CP School
High St. Primary School
Holton Junior School
Holton County Infants
Jenner Park Primary
Llancarfan CP School
Llanfair CP School
Llangan CP School
Maendy CP School
Palmerston Primary School
Radyr CP School
Rhws CP School
Romilly Junior School
Romilly Infants School
Sully Primary School
Tongwynlais CP
Victoria Primary School
Llanilltud Fawr Primary
Murch Junior School
St. Athan Junior School
St. Athan Infants School
St. Illtyd's Junior School
Llysfaen CP School
Evenlode CP School
Llandough Primary
Eagleswell Junior School
Y Bont Faen Primary
Bryn Deri CP School
St. Illtyd's Infants School
Danescourt Junior School
Gibbonsdown Junior School
Eagleswell Infants and Nursery School
Gibbonsdown Infants and Nursery School
Oakfield Junior School
Oakfield Infants and Nursery Unit
Danescourt Infants
St. Mellons CIW Primary
Penarth Church-in-Wales
St. Nicholas C/W Primary
Peterston S.Ely CIW School

Gwenfo CIW Primary
St. Alban's Roman Catholic Primary
St. Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Primary
St. Francis Roman Catholic Junior School
St. Francis Infants School
St. Joseph's Primary
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary
St. Peter's Junior School
St. Peter's Infants and Nursery School
St. Cadc's Primary School
St. Anne's CIW Infants
St. Monica's CIW School
St. Paul's CIW Primary
Tredegarville CIW Junior Infants
Llandaff City CIW Junior
Llandaff City CIW Infants
Christ the King Roman Catholic Primary School
St. John Lloyd Roman Catholic School
Holy Family Roman Catholic Junior and Infants
St. Mary the Virgin CIW
St. Philip Evans Roman Catholic Junior
All Saints CIW Primary
St. Philip Evans Roman Catholic Infants School
St. Helen's Infants and Nursery School
Pendoylan CIW Primary School
St. Andrews Major CIW
Llansannor and Llanharry CIW
St. Fagans CIW Primary
St. David's CIW Primary
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary
St. Helen's Roman Catholic Junior
St. Bernadette's Primary School
St. David's CIW Junior and Infants
All Saints CIW Primary

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those primary schools in Mid Glamorgan *(a)* which have classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction of first or second language pupils, *(b)* which have classes of first or second language pupils where some of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh, *(c)* which teach no Welsh, and *(d)* where Welsh is taught as a second language but not used as a teaching medium.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Mid Glamorgan schools with teaching through the medium of Welsh as a first or second language
Blaengarw Infants School
Blaenrhondda Primary School
Penygawsi County Primary School
Ynyswen Infants School
St. Brides Major CIW Primary

Mid Glamorgan schools with some classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction
Ysgol Santes Tudful
Penderyn County Primary School
Abercynon Infant School
Coedybrain Infant School
Dolau County Primary School
Gwaelod-y-Garth Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Pont-Sion-Norton
Heol-y-Celyn Primary School
Tiryberth Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Aberdar
Ysgol Gynradd Garth Olwg
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyderwen
Ysgol Ifor Bach
Ysgol Gynradd Tonyrefail
Ysgol Gynradd Caerffili
Ysgol Gynradd Llwyncelyn
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bargod
Ysgol Gynradd Ynyswen
Ysgol Gynradd Penybont
Creigiau Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Rhymni
Ysgol Gynradd Rhydy Grug
Ysgol Gynradd Llantrisant
Ysgol Gynradd Bodringallt
Ysgol Y Ferch Corneli

Ysgol Gynradd Castellau
Ysgol Llyn Y Forwyn
Ysgol Gymraeg Evan James

Mid Glamorgan schools with no teaching through the medium of Welsh

Abercanaid Primary School
Cyfarthfa Junior School
Brecon Road Infant School
Caedraw Primary School
Dowlais Infant School
Gellifaelog Primary School
Mount Pleasant Primary School
Pant Primary School
Pentrebach Infant School
Gwaunfarren Primary School
Heolgerrig Primary School
Troedyrhiw Junior School
Troedyrhiw Infant School
Twynyrodyn Junior School
Twynyrodyn Infant School
Gellideg Junior School
Gelligeg Infant School
Goetre Junior School
Goetre Infant School
Gwernllwyn Junior School
Ynysowen Junior School
Edwardsville Junior School
Ynysowen Infant School
Oaklands Primary School
Abercerdin Primary School
Aberllechau CP School
Aber Infant School
Bargoed Infant School
Betws Junior School
Alaw Primary School
Abernant CP School
Bedlinog Junior School
Blaengarw Junior School
Blaenclydach Infant School
Abertaf Primary School
Bedlinog Infant School
Cilfnydd CP School
Brynnau CP School
Blaenllechau Infant School
Brithdir Primary School
Coedpenmaen CP School
Blaenycwm Primary School
Bodringallt Junior School
Blaengwawr Primary School
Coed-y-Brain Junior School
Coedylan Primary School
Bodringallt Infant School
Bryncethin Junior School
Craig-yr-Eos Infant School
Caegarw CP School
Cwmlai Primary School
Cwmclydach Junior School
Cwmaber Junior School

Capcoch CP School
Brynmenyn Primary School
Gilfach Goch Infant School
Cwmclydach Infant School
Deri Primary School
Bryntirion Infants School
Glanffrwd Infant School
Cymmer Junior Mixed School
Caradog Primary School
Blaencaerau Junior School
Glantaf Infant School
Cymmer CP Infant School
Derwendeg CP School
Graig-y-Wion CP School
Dinas (TAI) Junior School
Carnetown Primary School
Dunraven CP School
Ffynnon Taf Primary School
Cefn Cribwr Primary School
Hawthorn CP School
Cefnpennar Infant School

Dyffryn Infant School
Comin Junior Mixed School
Fochriw Primary School
Coety CP School
Hendreforgan Junior School
Ferndale Junior Mixed School
Gelligaer Village Infant School
Hendreforgan Infant School
Ferndale Infant School
Comin County Infants School
Cwmfelin CP School
Llanilltud Faerdref Junior
Gelli CP School
Gilfach Fargod Primary School
Ffaldau CP School
Llanilltud Faerdref Infants
Coed-yr-Esgob CP School
Cwmaman County Infant School
Fronwen Primary School
Hafod CP School
Glan-y-Nant Infant School
Garth Junior School
Maes-y-Coed CP School
Cwmbach Infant School
Craig Bedlinog Infant School
Hendrefadog Infant School
Cwmdar CP School
Glynogwr CP School
Heolycyw CP School
Parclewis CP School
Llwyncelyn Infant School
Cynon Infant School

Hendre Junior School
Litchard Junior School
Llanharan County Primary School
Llwynypia County Primary School
Darrenlas Primary School
Hendre Infant School
Llangrallo County Primary School
Hengoed Junior School
Llangynwyd County Primary School
Penrhiwfer Infant School
Llanhari County Primary School
Maerdy Junior Mixed School
Glynrwyn Infant School
Hengoed Infant School
Pontsion Norton County Primary School
Maerdy Infant School
Glynhafod County Junior School
Llancaeach Junior School
Pontyclun Junior School
Parc Primary School
Mynydd Cynffig County Junior
Pwllgwaun Infant School
Gwernifor County Junior School
Mynydd Cynffig County Infants
Rhigos County Primary School
Tonyrefail Primary School
Pentre Primary School
Hirwaun Junior School
Llanfabon Infant School
Nantyffyllon County Primary School
Nantgarw Infant School
Pentyrch County Primary School
Penygraig Junior Mixed School
Hirwaun Infant School
Nantymoel Junior School
Penygraig Infant School
Llwydcoed Primary School
Nantymoel Infant School
Trallwng Infant School
Penyrenglyn Junior Mixed School
Newtown Primary School
Newton Primary School
Trefforest County Primary School
Pontlotyn Infant and Nursery School
Penyrenglyn Infant School
Pengeulan County Primary School
Rhydri Primary School
Nottage County Primary School

Pontrhondda County Primary School
Senghenydd County Primary School
Oldcastle Junior School
Trehopcyn County Primary School
Pontygwaith County Primary School
Penrhiwceibr Junior School
Oldcastle Infant School
The Graig Junior Mixed School
Pandy Infant School
Trerobart CP School
Penrhiwceibr Infant School
St. Gwladys County Mixed Junior
Pencoed County Junior School
Porth Infant School
Penywaun Infant and Nursery School
South Bargoed Infant School
Pencoed Infant school
Perthcelyn County Infant School
Tirphil Primary School
Penybont Primary School
Ton Junior Mixed School
Ynysboeth Junior School
Craig-Yr-Hesg CP School
Ynysboeth CP Infant School
Pil County Primary School
Llwyncrwn Primary School
Ton County Infant School
Penywaun County Junior School
Trelewis Primary School
Plasnewydd Junior School
Tonypandy CP School
Twyn County Junior School
Plasnewydd Infant School
Gwauncelyn Infant School
Cwmbach County Junior School
Twyn Infant School
Gwauncelyn Junior School
Trealaw CP School
Glenboi CP School
Ystrad Mynach County Junior
Cefn Primary School
Treherbert County Infant School
Ystrad Mynach County Infants
Treorchy Primary School
Cwmifor Junior School
Tondu Infant School
Cwm Ifor Infant School
Trelales CP School
Gwaunmeisgyn Junior School
Williamstown Primary School
Gwaunmeisgyn Infant School
Maesybryn Primary School
Tylorstown Primary School
Lansbury Park Junior School
Lansbury Park Infant School
Tynewydd Junior School
Tref-Y-Rhyg Primary School
Plas-Y-Felin Infant School
Plasyfelin Junior School
Tynyrheol Primary School
Ynyshir Infant School
Greenhill Primary School
Croesty County Primary School
Maesyfelin Infant School
Pandy'r Betws Infants School
Marlas Infant School
Corneli Junior School
Rhiwgarn Infant School
Penrhys Infant School
Llangewydd Junior School
Penrhys Junior School
Bryntirion Junior School
Porth Junior Mixed School
Porthcawl Primary School
Litchard Infant School
Cefn Glas Infant School
West Park Primary School
Bryncethin Infant School
Brackla Junior School
Afon-y-Felin Primary School
Tonysguboriau County Primary School
Upper Rhymney Primary School
Lower Rhymney Primary School
Abertysswg Primary School
Elliot Town Primary School
Phillipstown Primary School
Cwmsyfiog Primary School
Aberbargoed County Junior School
Abergargoed Infant School
Maesycwmmer Primary School
Bedwas Junior School
Tyn-y-Wern Junior School
Tyn-y-Wern Infant School
Machen Primary School
Graig-y-Rhacca Junior School
Ysgol-y-Graig Primary
Blaenllynfi Infant School
Graig-y-Rhacca Infant School
Bedwas Infant School
Hendredenny Park Primary
Cwm Glas Infant School
Gelligaer Village Junior School
Pontlotyn Junior School
Tondu Junior School
Ynyshir Junior Mixed School
Cwmaber County Infant School
Edwardsville Infant School
Garth Infant School
Brackla Infant School
Tremains Primary School
Penyfai CIW Primary
St. Illtyds RC Primary School
St. Marys RC Primary School
St. Aloysius Primary School
Our Ladys RC Primary School
St. Helen's RC Primary School
St. Mary's and St. Patricks
St. Michael's RC Primary School
St. Gabriel and Raphael RC Primary School
St. Margaret's RC Primary
St. Robert's RC Primary
Aberdare Town CW. Primary
Cwmbach CIW. Primary School
Wick Marcross CIW. Primary
St. Mary's RC Primary School

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those primary schools in West Glamorgan (a) which have classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction of first or second language pupils, (b) which have classes of first or second language pupils, where some of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh, (c) which teach no Welsh and (d) where Welsh is taught as a second language but not used as a teaching medium.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

West Glamorgan Schools with some Classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction.

Ysgol Gymraeg Lonlas
Ysgol Gymraeg Bryn-Y-Mor
Clydach Infant School
Ysgol Gynradd Cwmgors
Cwmllynfell C.P. School
Ysgol Gynradd Felindre
Garnswllt CP School
Glyn Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen
Ysgol Gymraeg Rhosafan
Ysgol Gymraeg Castellnedd
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bryniago
Ysgol Gynradd Blaendulais
Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmnedd
Ysgol Gymraeg Pontybrenin
Ysgol Gynradd Pontardawe

West Glamorgan Schools with Teaching through the medium of Welsh as a first or second Language

Godrergraig Primary School
Trethmelyn Primary School
Rhiwfawr Primary School
Trebannws Primary School
Y Wern Primary School
Y Login Fach Primary School

West Glamorgan schools with no teaching through the medium of Welsh

Brynhyfryd Junior School
Brynhyfryd Infants School
Brynmill Primary School
Cadle Junior School
Cadle Infants School
Cwn Primary School
Cwmbwrla Primary School
Cwmrhydyceirw Primary School
Danygraig Primary School
Dunvant Junior School
Gendros Primary School
Glais Primary School
Gors Junior School
Gors Infants School
Graig Infants School
Grange Primary School
Gwyrosydd Junior School
Gwyrosydd Infants School
Hafod Primary School
Manselton Primary School
Mayhill Junior School
Mayhill Infants School
Morriston Junior Boys School
Morriston Infants School
Oystermouth Primary School
Pentrechwyth Primary School
Pentrepoeth Junior Girls School
Pentrepoeth Infants and Nursery School
Plasmarl County Primary School
Sketty Primary School
St. Helen's Primary School
St. Thomas's Primary School
Terrace Road County Primary School
Townhill Primary School
Waunarlwydd Primary School
Waun Wen Primary School
Clwyd Primary School
Ynystawe County Primary School
Clase Infant School
Clase Junior School
Portmead Primary School
Mayals County Primary School
Cwmglas Primary School
Trallwn County Primary Infant School
Arfryn Primary School
Blanymaes Primary School
Trallwn County Primary Junior School
Parkland Primary School
Birchgrove Infants School
Dunvant Infant School
Newton County Primary School
Whitestone County Primary School
Hendrefoilan Primary School
Birchgrove Junior School
Alltwen County Primary School
Blaendulais Primary School
Bishopston Primary School
Blaengwrach CP School
Casllwchwr Primary School
Cila CP School
Blaenhonddan CP School
Abergwynfi Junior School
Clydach Junior School
Brynhyfryd CP School
Abergwynfi Infant School
Craigcefnparc CP School
Clun Primary School
Baglan Primary School
Crwys CP School
Coedffranc Junior School
Bryn CP School
Coedffranc Infant School
Central Junior School
Creunant Primary School
Central Infant School
Cwmafan Junior School
Crymlyn CP School
Cwmafan Infant School
Cwn Nedd Primary School
Cymer Afan Primary School
Dyffryn Afan CP School
Eastern Primary School
Gorseinon County Junior School
Gnoll Primary School
Glan-Y-Mor CP School
Gorseinon Infants School
Glyncorrwg Primary School
Catwg CP School
Llansawel CP School
Llanforlais Primary School
Maesmarchog CP School
Pontrhlydlyfen Primary School
Llangyfelach CP School
Llanrhidian Primary School
Melin Junior School
Sandfields Primary School
Tonmawr Primary School
Mynachlog Nedd Junior School
Penclawdd Junior School
Penclawdd Infant School
Neath Abbey Infants
Tirmorfa Primary School
Pengelli Primary School
Croeserw Primary School
Penllergaer Primary School
Tywyn Primary School
Penyrheol Primary School
Llangiwg Primary School
Tonnau Primary/Comm. School
Pontarddulais Primary School
Ynysfach Comm. Primary School
Blaenbaglan Primary School
Pontlliw CP School
Ynysmaerdy CP School
Crynallt Junior School
Rhos CP School
Hengwrt CP School
Rhydyfro Primary School
Groes CP School
Tairgwaith Primary School
Crynallt Infant School
Tregwyr Junior School
Tregwyr Infant School
Tre Uchaf CP School
Craigfelen Primary School
Pennard Primary School
Knelston Primary School
Dyfnant CP School
Waunceirch CP School
Pontybrenin Primary School
Talycopa Primary School
Glyncollen Primary School
Melin County Infant School
Cilffriw Primary School
St. Josephs Junior School
St. Josephs Infants School
St. David's RC Primary School
St. Illtyd's RC Primary
Christchurch CIW School
St. Josephs RC Primary School
St. Josephs RC Primary School
St. Josephs Infant School
Bryncoch CIW School
Ald Davies' CIW School
St. Therese's RC School
St. Josephs RC Junior School

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Aflatoxin

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and respective weight of imported cargoes of peanuts containing aflatoxin greater than the voluntary limit of 0·03 mg/kg for each of the last five years; and if he will indicate in respect of each cargo the ultimate purpose for which the peanuts were used.

Mr. Donald Thompson: This information is not available.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has consulted the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds concerning the introduction of statutory limits of aflatoxin in nuts.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria are applied in determining the safe level of aflatoxin in nuts and nut products used for *(a)* human consumption, *(b)* feed stuffs for birds and animals which are kept for the production of meat, wool, and so on, *(c)* pet food and *(d)* wild bird food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 21 April at column *565* and the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Caerphilly on 18 April at column *279*.

Licensed Trade (Tenant's Security)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the working of the code of practice on tenant's security in respect of the licensed trade.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has received very few complaints from tenants about the working of the code since it was introduced by the Brewers' Society in 1973. I am, however, aware of the view expressed by some hon. Members concerning its application in two recent cases.

TRANSPORT

Carlisle-Settle Railway Line

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received on the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: I continue to receive various representations from hon. Members local authorities and others with an interest in the line. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to make an announcement about the line's future shortly.

Road Traffic Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total amount of road traffic from the Republic of Ireland which passed through the United Kingdom on its way to the continent of Europe during the last year for which full figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No figures are available for car or coach traffic. Regarding goods traffic, it is estimated that in 1987 around 14,000 Irish-registered road goods vehicles left British ports for mainland Europe, most of which would have entered Great Britain from the Republic carrying (or going to fetch) goods in transit to (or from) mainland Europe. This and earlier figures are published in "Road Goods Vehicles on Roll-on Roll-off Ferries to Mainland Europe, 4th Quarter 1987" Department of Transport bulletin (88)1, a copy of which is in the Library. The figure does not include non-Irish foreign vehicles carrying Irish trade—a much smaller number; nor does it include British vehicles, either towing trailers making transit journeys, or otherwise carrying Irish trade with Europe between British ports.

Rail Service (Bedford-St. Pancras)

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any recommendations from the emergency services regarding the rail service between Bedford and St. Pancras.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received no such recommendations. Perhaps my hon. Friend could write if he has any specific incident in mind.

M40

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give his latest estimate for completion of the M40.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Construction of some sections of the M40 extension between Oxford and Birmingham is already under way. Subject to the outcome of the recent public inquiry, work on the final section between Waterstock and Wendlebury, near Oxford, could start next year to enable the whole motorway extension to be open to traffic in 1991.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his conclusions on the adequacy of the proposed two-lane section of the M40 to take anticipated traffic flows up to the year 2000.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proposals for the Waterstock to Wendlebury section of the M40 were the subject of a public inquiry which ended in January. Before reaching final decisions on the standard of the road, we will carefully consider all the views expressed, together with the recommendations of the independent inspector.

Continental Passenger Trains

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assurances he has received from British Rail that its main lines will be able to be used by continental passenger trains, following the opening of the Channel tunnel, without the need for passengers to change to British Rail rolling stock to complete their journey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Most existing continental passenger trains are too wide and high for much of the British system. British Rail and French and Belgian railways are therefore jointly planning to operate a new fleet of high-speed passenger trains and night sleepers through the Channel tunnel. These trains will be designed to operate on all three networks.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how may council tenants over the ages of 70, 80 and 90 years, respectively, have *(a)* applied to buy and *(b)* bought their council homes for each year since 1980 for which figures are available.

Mrs. Roe: Information is not collected on the age of tenants applying to buy or buying their council homes.

Licensed Trade Tenants

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the question of licensed trade tenants' security; if he will bring forward proposals for making them subject to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received three representations since 1985, in addition to those received by MAFF. In 1985 my Department reviewed the Landlord and Tenant Act, part II, including proposals for extending its provisions to cover licensed trade tenants. Wide consultation revealed insufficient grounds for amending the legislation; that remains the position.

Water Authorities

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the increases in both domestic and business charges by all the regional water authorities for each of the past five years.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested on increases in domestic water charges was set out in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 29 June 1987 *Official Report*, column *46*. Information on business charges will require time to prepare. I will answer that part of the hon. Member's as soon as it is available.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the annual return on assets by all the regional water authorities for each of the past five years.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is set out for English water authorities in the table.

Achieved rate of return (DOE services) per cent.

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Northumbrian	1·62	1·75	1·78	2·11	2·39
Northwest	1·36	1·16	0·72	1·37	1·69
Severn Trent	1·36	1·10	1·00	1·39	1·97
Yorkshire	1·31	1·25	0·99	1·35	1·74
Anglian	2·29	1·69	1·59	1·83	2·43
Thames	0·88	0·90	1·13	1·68	1·80
Southern	1·22	0·97	0·93	1·56	1·91
Wessex	1·31	1·08	0·77	1·28	1·99
Southwest	1·52	1·39	1·46	1·88	2·05

Source: Water Authorities' Annual Reports and Accounts.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are given to regional water authorities on the revaluation of assets which are underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Guidance on accounting matters is given to each water authority in a letter from the Department which is reproduced in their annual accounts which are laid before Parliament and placed in the Library. The Water Authorities (Return on Assets) Order 1987, SI No. 2022, 1987 prescribes the basis on which assets are to be valued for the purposes of the order.

Norfolk House, East Kilbride

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment the Property Services Agency has made of the potential of Norfolk house in East Kilbride for the location of Civil Service work, what number of posts of *(a)* temporary and *(b)* a permanent nature are to be located on the site; and what is the nature of the work to be undertaken.

Mr. Chope: There is no current Civil Service requirement for accommodation in the East Kilbride area for which Norfolk house would be suitable. Norfolk house is surplus to requirements and is on the market for disposal.

Combustion Plants

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the oil industry concerning the European Community directive on large combustion plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My officials have regular discussions with representatives of the oil industry about this draft directive, and my noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water was recently in correspondence with the president of the United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association on this subject.

London Boroughs (Debts)

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green of 28 April and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *459*, why the information placed in the Library is incomplete for the London boroughs; and if he will now provide the information on indebtedness for all London boroughs.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 4 May 1988]:* The information, which related to 1986-87, placed in the Library is incomplete because the following authorities had not submitted returns: Camden, Greenwich, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Brent, Ealing, Haringey, Harrow. Southwark and Harrow have since submitted returns, but the table provides information for all London boroughs for 1984-85, the latest year for which complete information is available.

Capital Debt and Total Capital Debt per head of population at end of 1984-85

	Total Debt (£000)	*Debt per head of population (£000)*
Camden	558,684	3104
Greenwich	356,276	1649
Hackney	400,130	2128

	Total Debt (£000)	Debt per head of population (£000)
Hammersmith and Fulham	227,770	1508
Islington	589,736	3574
Kensington and Chelsea	252,758	1859
Lambeth	528,881	2168
Lewisham	337,080	1453
Southwark	550,306	2548
Tower Hamlets	184,188	1270
Wandsworth	334,683	1297
Westminster	234,179	1287
Barking and Dagenham	91,597	615
Barnet	167,530	562
Bexley	111,556	512
Brent	347,212	1362
Bromley	119,202	400
Croydon	151,699	476
Ealing	274,678	950
Enfield	198,840	756
Haringey	421,275	2106
Harrow	123,380	611
Havering	119,789	499
Hillingdon	228,911	987
Hounslow	232,752	1176
Kingston-upon-Thames	73,113	546
Merton	144,982	884
Newham	372,853	1784
Redbridge	133,887	590
Richmond-upon-Thames	82,331	511
Sutton	87,157	513
Waltham Forest	182,655	850
City of London	245,621	49,124

Property Transactions

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make a public announcement on the completion of any property transactions involving the acquisition of new accommodation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* No. This would not be practicable as the PSA is constantly relinquishing and acquiring property as part of the management of a civil estate comprising about 8,800 properties.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Newtownards Vehicle Inspection Centre

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in relation to the Newtownards vehicle inspection centre *(a)* the operating hours each day, *(b)* the number of vehicles being tested each day and *(c)* the present waiting list of vehicles requiring tests; and what provision there is at present for overtime work at this centre.

Mr. Needham: The operating hours of the Newtownards vehicle inspection and driving test centre are 8.25 am-4.55 pm, Monday to Friday inclusive. The number of vehicles being tested each day is 110. On 22 April 1988 the waiting time for test appointments was four weeks for goods vehicles and six weeks for private cars.

There is no provision at present for overtime working at this centre.

Car Parking (Newtownards)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what free car parking he proposes *(a)* to retain and *(b)* to provide in Newtownards for persons travelling into the town to work in shops and commercial premises.

Mr. Needham: It is the intention of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) that the existing car parks at Ann street, Upper Court street and Talbot street, Newtownards should remain free of charge for the foreseeable future.

Potatoes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many potato producers in Northern Ireland have been seriously affected by the potato surplus between September 1987 and March 1988.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 4 May 1988]:* Information on the effect on individual producers is not available to the Department of Agriculture.

Army Information Services

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which officials in charge of the Army Information Services at HQ, Northern Ireland, since 1971 have been interviewed by an official inquiry or by other official persons in connection with *(a)* psychological information, *(b)* an alleged shoot to kill policy, *(c)* alleged political disinformation, and *(d)* any alleged use of forged documentation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

It is not the practice to comment on specific individuals.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Southern Africa

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on relations with Southern Africa in the light of the Gersony report, sponsored by the United States State Department, on conditions in Mozambique; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We encourage peaceful solutions to regional problems. Our substantial aid programme contributes to the relief of suffering and the promotion of economic development in Mozambique. The Gersony report bears out our view of RENAMO as responsible for widespread and premeditated atrocities and as lacking any general support amongst the Mozambican people.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received since 1 January regarding South African-backed incursions into Mozambique; what representations he has made to the South African Government on such matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no evidence of recent incursions. We condemn cross-border violations in either direction.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the Irish Republic about the

claim to part of the United Kingdom embodied in articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution; and what further representations he intends to make.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: None. Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement explicitly states that both Governments "affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why no Government dwellings were completed on St. Helena in 1987-88, and how many are expected to be completed in 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: No Government dwellings were built last year on St. Helena because the Public Works Department was fully committed to other major projects such as the Prince Andrew school and the bulk fuel installation. However, £165,000 was made available from our aid programme for use by the private sector through the Housing Assistance Board.

St. Helena's housing policy for 1988-89 is still under consideration and it is not yet known how many dwellings will be built this year.

DEFENCE

Chile (Arms Purchases)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any inquiries from the Government of Chile regarding the possible purchase of Javelin anti-aircraft missiles from Short Brothers.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive British Governments not to comment on matters relating to the supply of defence equipment to foreign Governments.

AQD Laboratories, Harefield

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet reached a decision as to whether there is a continuing service requirement for the AQD Laboratories at Harefield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: AQD, Harefield, closed on 26 February 1988. Since there is no further defence requirement for the site it will be passed to the PSA which will arrange for its disposal on the open market.

AWACS

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects each of the seven Boeing AWACS aircraft ordered in place of Nimrod AEW, to be available for active service in the Royal Air Force; to what extent these anticipated in-service dates differ from those originally promised and announced; and if the delivery and technical performance of the various auxiliary systems that Boeing is purchasing from its subcontractors are now guaranteed.

Mr. Sainsbury: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced to the House on 18 December 1986, at column 1352, the AWACS aircraft will be delivered into RAF service starting in 1991. Since that announcement there has been no slippage in the anticipated in-service dates.

The delivery and technical performance of the various auxiliary systems that Boeing is purchasing from its subcontractors form part of Boeing's overall contractual commitment to deliver complete AWACS aircraft meeting our performance requirements. The programme is currently on schedule with no major technical problems.

Israel

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give figures for trade between Israel and Britain, for each of the past five years, in military products.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to give details of defence equipment sales. We maintain restrictions on arms sales to Israel because of the continuing Israeli military presence in Lebanon.

Ammunition and Explosives (Storage)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answer of 20 April concerning ammunition and explosives stored near to population areas, whether, following the Donnington fires, he will review his Department's policy in connection with *(a)* planning applications which involve the encroachment of buildings towards the defence estate, *(b)* the possible removal of ammunition and explosives stores from current defence estate sites where population areas have built-up nearby, and *(c)* the encroachment of the defence estate toward residential areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am satisfied with the present procedures for consultation between local planning authorities and my Department in respect of planning applications for developments in areas surrounding certain Ministry of Defence establishments, including depots holding ammunition and explosives, neither of which are stored at Donnington. There are, however, major difficulties in relocating ammunition and explosives depots from those areas which have already become built-up, although stringent safety rules are enforced. We are equally concerned to ensure that hazard zones around certain Ministry of Defence establishments do not affect members of the public and, although the Crown is not bound by the Town and Country Planning Acts, it is my Department's policy to observe similar planning procedures.

US Nuclear Submarines

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the implications for continued sharing of nuclear defence information under the Anglo-American mutual defence agreement of the leaked documents on the maintenance of US nuclear submarines at Holy Loch published in *The Scotsman* newspaper on 22 April;

(2) what is his assessment of the implications for the operational practice of United States submarines allocated to NATO duty of the leaked documents published in *The Scotsman* newspaper on 22 April originating at the Holy Loch submarine base;

(3) what are the implications of the leaked documents from the United States naval base at Holy Loch published

in *The Scotsman* newspaper on 22 April for the ordering programme for the Polaris-Poseidon material management system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The loss of internal United States Navy documents which I understand were unclassified is a matter for the United States authorities. I am assured that there are no implications of the kind referred to by the hon. Member.

Atomic Energy Authority

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any work is carried out for his Department at the Atomic Energy Research establishment operated by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: MOD uses the services of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority establishment at Harwell as appropriate on normal commercial terms.

Corsham Bunker Complex

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the Corsham Bunker complex belonging to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a number of representations making speculative remarks about the Corsham site, on which I am not prepared to comment.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the purpose and functions of his Department's Corsham Bunker complex.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

Mr. Colin Wallace (Dossier)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces and civil servants have been interviewed in connection with the dossier of information submitted to the Prime Minister on 1 November 1984 by Mr. Colin Wallace.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 20 July 1987 at columns *93-94*.

Irish Republic

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, in each year from 1973 to the current date, members of the armed forces on duty have crossed into the Irish Republic.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* From records held, the number of occasions when members of Her Majesty's armed forces on duty have crossed into the Republic of Ireland by year since 1982 is as follows. The figures include crossings both on land and in the air. Records of such occasions prior to 1982 are not available.

Year	*Number*
1982	45
1983	31
1984	31
1985	27
1986	50
1987	55
[1]1988	11

[1] As at 27 April 1988.

On the vast majority of occasions the border was crossed as a result of navigational errors; these incidents were notified to the Irish Government. On the remaining occasions, the border was crossed with the agreement of the Irish Government.

Covert Operations (Forgery)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the forging of documents by Army printing presses in Northern Ireland, in connection with covert operations.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* It is not the practice to comment on operational matters.

Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 28 March, *Official Report*, column *364*, when information on the Northern Ireland training and advisory team became unavailable.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

Royal Engineer Survey Troop

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 28 March, *Official Report*, column *364*, on what basis detailed records relating to the Royal Engineer survey troop were destroyed or disposed of.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* They were destroyed when no longer required.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 28 March, *Official Report*, column *364*, what other Royal Engineer survey troops were stationed at Castledillon in 1974-75; and what was their numerical designation.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* None.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 28 March, *Official Report*, column *364*, on what date the Royal Engineer survey troop was formed; and on what date it was dispersed;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 28 March, *Official Report*, column *364*, on what date the 4th Field Survey Troop, Royal Engineers, was formed; and when it was disbanded.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* 4 Field Survey Troop Royal Engineers was formed in early 1973 at Castledillon, and disbanded in late 1975, since there was no longer a requirement for the unit.

Records (Destruction)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the destruction of original records kept by his Department.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* The policy regarding the destruction of original records by the Ministry of Defence is governed by the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967.

Army Information Services

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of the scripts of Army Information Services presentations at Commander Land Forces study days at Army Headquarters Northern Ireland from January 1975 to the current date.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* No.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of all printed material designed and printed at Army Headquarters Northern Ireland and disseminated to the public from 1972 to the current date.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* No. Comprehensive records of such published documents since 1972 could not be compiled without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions members of the Army Information Services have planted hoax bombs between 1973 and the current date; and whether such devices were subsequently dismantled by an Army explosive ordnance disposal team.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I am aware of none. Such an act would not have been part of the duties of a member of the Army Information Services and would have been illegal.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if any members of the Army Information Services in Northern Ireland, including those involved in psychological operations, have ever carried or been involved in possession of captured terrorist weapons or explosives in public places from 1972 to the current date;

(2) if, from 1972 to the current date, members of the Army Information Services in Northern Ireland, have ever been asked to masquerade as members of paramilitary groups; and whether such activity included the carrying of captured terrorist weapons or explosives.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I am aware of none.

Firearms (Silencers)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions firearms fitted with silencers have been used by members of the Army in Northern Ireland against civilian targets in each year since 1972.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I am aware of none.

Psychological Operations

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where courses have been held on psychological warfare and psychological operations in which his Department was involved in each year from 1972 to the current date in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Courses were held, until their closure, at the joint warfare establishment at Old Sarum, Salisbury (1972-78), and at the joint warfare wing of the National Defence College at Latimer (1978-82). Since 1982 responsibility for the courses has transferred to MOD central staff. With regard to courses in the United States of America, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 7 March 1988 at column *59*.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis civil servants or Army personnel have been selected to attend psychological warfare and psychological operations courses from 1972 to the current date.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Information for the period 1972-73 is no longer available. From 1973 to the present day eligibility for attendance has extended to any officer of the rank of lieutenant-commander or equivalent and above. For those MOD posts which may require a further understanding of psychological operations techniques attendance is mandatory before appointment is taken up.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the syllabus of courses in psychological warfare and psychological operations in which his Department was involved *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the United States of America, from 1972 to the current date.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* No.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the officers commanding the information policy unit, information liaison unit and the information planning unit in Northern Ireland, underwent training in psychological operations or psychological warfare in the United States of America from 1971 to the current date.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 7 March 1988 at column *59*.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many employees of the BBC from 1971 to current date attended courses or seminars at his Department's establishments relating to psychological operations or psychological warfare activities.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* The present courses are open only to students from Ministry of Defence and NATO military and civilian staffs.

Joint Warfare Establishment and Joint Intelligence Centre

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list any non-governmental individuals or

organisations, in each year from 1972 to current date, which visited the joint warfare establishment or joint intelligence centre.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* No records of visits by individuals from non-governmental organisations are available prior to 1978. From the records available from 1978 to date, apart from guest speakers, no such visits to the joint warfare wing or its successor establishment can be identified.

Security Forces (Civilian Deaths)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any civilians have been shot by members of the security forces using captured terrorist weapons.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I am aware of none.

Exercise Clockwork Orange

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what inquiries were undertaken by his Department into the circumstances surrounding the operation in Northern Ireland known as Clockwork Orange.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 20 July 1987 at columns *93-94*.

Captain Fred Holroyd, Retired

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to the answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *362*, if he is able to specify the various dates when assistance was given by his Department to the Royal Ulster Constabulary into the allegations of Captain Fred Holroyd (retired);

(2) pursuant to the answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *362*, if he is able to specify what appropriate assistance was given to the Royal Ulster Constabulary into the allegations of Captain Fred Holroyd (retired);

(3) pursuant to the answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *362*, from what grade or grades of civil servant appropriate assistance was given to the Royal Ulster Constabulary into the allegations of Captain Fred Holroyd (retired).

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on that occasion.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving or former serving members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been charged with criminal offences since 1971.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However, since September 1984, 234 members of the UDR have been convicted in the civil courts of criminal offences whilst still serving. These figures exclude minor motoring offences. In the case of serious offences, the soldiers convicted were discharged from the regiment in accordance with UDR regulations. Comparable information is not available before September 1984. Information is not held by my Department about former serving members of the UDR who were convicted of offences after they had left the regiment.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 7 March, *Official Report*, column *60*, on what date Mr. Colin Wallace was commissioned into the Ulster Defence Regiment; and on what date he was promoted to captain.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* As I explained in my letter of 18 April to the hon. Member, Mr. Wallace was granted a commission as a part-time member of the UDR in the rank of second-lieutenant and was granted the acting rank of captain both with effect from 18 January 1972.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police to provide evidence to support the chief constable's statement of 27 April, that the application was properly and thoroughly inquired into in the cases of applications for the grant of a firearms certificate dated 23 November 1986, the variation to the certificate dated 23 March 1987 and the variation to the certificate dated 14 July 1987 of the late Michael Ryan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Juvenile Offenders

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the number of 14-year-olds given custodial sentences in 1986 by constabulary area; and if he will express these figures also as a percentage of juveniles cautioned or found guilty of an offence in a juvenile court.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally which may be incomplete, is given in the following table. Data relating to juveniles found guilty at magistrates' courts giving a breakdown by police force area and offence group are published annually in tables S3.2(B) and S3.2(C) of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Vol. 3". Similar information about juvenile cautioning is available in tables S3.7(B) and S3.7(C) of this publication, copies of which are in the Library.

Juveniles found guilty at magistrates' courts or cautioned for indictable offences by police force area
England and Wales 1986 *Numbers and percentages*

Police force area	*Number of males aged 14 given detention centre orders* [1] [3] *(a)*	*Number of persons aged 10-16 found guilty at magistrates' courts or cautioned*[2] *(b)*	*(a) as a percentage of (b)* *(c)*
Avon and Somerset	5	3,088	0·16
Bedfordshire	4	1,381	0·29
Cambridgeshire	3	1,833	0·16
Cheshire	8	2,507	0·32
Cleveland	10	2,970	0·34
Cumbria	7	1,688	0·41
Derbyshire	12	2,219	0·54
Devon and Cornwall	14	2,446	0·57
Dorset	3	1,332	0·23
Durham	20	2,341	0·85
Essex	4	3,110	0·13
Gloucestershire	—	1,188	—
Greater Manchester	88	10,801	0·81
Hampshire	5	4,599	0·11
Hertfordshire	4	2,125	0·19
Humberside	7	3,493	0·20
Kent	5	2,669	0·19
Lancashire	24	3,968	0·60
Leicestershire	11	2,366	0·46
Lincolnshire	9	1,841	0·49
London, City of	—	40	—
Merseyside	26	4,375	0·59
Metropolitan Police District	53	13,942	0·38
Norfolk	6	1,805	0·33
Northamptonshire	3	1,235	0·24
Northumbria	34	6,285	0·54
North Yorkshire	4	1,794	0·22
Nottinghamshire	12	4,579	0·26
South Yorkshire	19	4,716	0·40
Staffordshire	11	1,876	0·59
Suffolk	—	1,545	—
Surrey	4	988	0·40
Sussex	7	2,328	0·30
Thames Valley	8	3,834	0·21
Warwickshire	—	1,019	—
West Mercia	5	2,796	0·18
West Midlands	25	10,755	0·23
West Yorkshire	39	8,351	0·47
Wiltshire	1	1,734	0·06
Dyfed Powys	1	833	0·12
Gwent	3	1,596	0·19
North Wales	10	1,667	0·60
South Wales	18	3,921	0·46
England and Wales	532	139,979	0·38

[1] Custodial penalties are not available for females aged 14.
[2] The majority of these offenders would have appeared at juvenile courts.
[3] Figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Nationality

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff were employed in the nationality division of his Department to process nationality applications in each month since April 1987.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* The numbers of staff employed in case-working groups processing nationality applications were:

	Numbers
1987	
April	151
May	148
June	152
July	146
August	144
September	151
October	149
November	148
December	150
1988	
January	148
February	149
March	149
April	147

These figures do not include staff processing inquiries about citizenship status, dealing with requests for application forms and maintaining the computer records which support the processing of cases.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contingency plans were made by the nationality division of his Department in early 1987 to deal with the expected extra work caused by the

nationality deadlines; and how those plans were amended in October 1987 when the extent of that extra demand became apparent.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* An additional case-working group (17 staff) was created on 1 April 1987; and further provision was made to increase from 150 to 170 the number of staff wholly employed on considering applications with effect from 1 April 1988.

In August 1987, case-working resources were diverted to responding promptly to general inquiries about citizenship and supplying application forms and to recording the receipt of new applications. When it became apparent that these measures were insufficient to deal with the growing volume of new applications being received, overtime working began on 8 November and has been in operation ever since. The full extent of the demand did not become apparent until after December 1987, when 100,000 citizenship applications were submitted in one month. Further measures have been taken since then, including the ones I announced in the House on 16 February 1988 at column 683.

Because of the priority accorded to these matters, and recruitment difficulties in the Croydon area, it has not yet been possible to achieve the projected increase in case-working capacity provided for from 1 April 1988. That will be done as soon as possible. We hope also to announce shortly detailed plans for substantial additional case-working capacity at a new location, probably on Merseyside.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecutors (Manual of Guidance)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the manual of guidance issued to Crown prosecutors in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement as to the criteria upon which a decision to prosecute is based, as set out in the manual.

The Attorney-General *[pursuant to his reply, 22 April 1988, c. 574]:* I have now had the opportunity of considering with the Director of Public Prosecutions whether it would be proper to place the manuals of guidance issued to Crown prosecutors in the Library. It is the view of both the Director and myself that such a course would be inappropriate.

The requirement in section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 to publish guidance for Crown prosecutors expressly refers to the general principles upon which certain key prosecution decisions are taken. As I stated in my answer of 22 April, those general principles are set out and illustrated in the code for Crown prosecutors. The terms of section 10 do not, in my view, require the Director to make available for inspection detailed internal guidance, instructions, and so on, issued to assist Crown prosecutors in the exercise of their duties and assembled for convenience in manual form.

Both the Director and I continue to recognise the need for the general principles of prosecution decision-making to be as open and easily understood as possible. With this objective in mind, the Director is considering whether, and, if so, to what extent, the existing published criteria might usefully be expanded.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Achievements

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the achievements of Her Majesty's Government since May 1979 in respect of the whole of the United Kingdom and also in respect of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The rate of inflation has been reduced to levels not seen for 20 years. The United Kingdom is well into its seventh successive year of steady growth, at an average annual rate of 3 per cent.; in 1987 national output grew faster than in any other major industrialised country. Business investment reached a record level in 1987 and is forecast to rise by a further 9 per cent. in 1988. Since 1981, United Kingdom manufacturers have maintained their volume share of world trade, following decades of decline; and in 1987 their share increased slightly. The level of the United Kingdom's net overseas assets has increased sevenfold since 1979 to about £90 billion by the end of 1987, yielding earnings of over £5·5 billion in 1987. Manufacturing productivity has risen at an average annual rate of over 5 per cent. since 1980—faster than in any other major industrialised country, after being at the bottom of the league in the previous two decades. In 1987, non-North sea company profitability rose to 10·5 per cent., its highest level for over 20 years, having risen in every year since 1981.

The Government have continued to maintain sound public finances, and have now balanced the budget. In 1987-88, for only the second year since the beginning of the 1950s, the Government made a net repayment of public sector debt. The burden of debt interest has fallen, and this, together with continued improvements in efficiency, has enabled the Government to increase spending on priority programmes while ensuring that public expenditure continues to fall as a proportion of GDP.

The Government have pursued a substantial programme of tax reform. The aim has been to create a climate in which businesses can thrive and individual initiative and risk-taking are rewarded. The basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33 to 25 per cent., and the main personal allowances are fully 25 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79. Nine higher rates of income tax running up to 83 per cent. have been replaced by a single higher rate of 40 per cent. A new system of independent taxation for husbands and wives will apply from 1990. Business taxation has been radically restructured, leaving the United Kingdom corporation tax rate one of the lowest in the industrialised world. Seventeen rates of capital transfer tax running up to 75 per cent. have been replaced by a single rate of 40 per cent. on inheritance; and the taxation of purely inflationary capital gains has been ended. Five taxes and a number of unjustified tax breaks have been abolished.

Since 1979, the Government have privatised 17 major companies and a number of other enterprises. As a result of this policy and tax reliefs designed to encourage shareholding, the number of individual shareowners in the United Kingdom, at one in five of the adult population, has trebled since 1979. Getting on for 40 per cent. of the state-owned industrial sector the Government inherited in 1979 has been returned to private enterprise. And the

privatisation programme is set to continue — the Government have already announced their intention to privatise the electricity supply industry, the water authorities in England and Wales and British Steel.

The Government have introduced a large number of measures to improve the operation of markets. Pay, price and dividend controls have been abolished, together with controls on foreign exchange, bank lending and hire purchase, and restrictions on industrial and office development. Incentives have been increased by tax reductions and reform and by the restructuring of national insurance contributions. The Government have introduced a tax relief to encourage the spread of profit-related pay.

Employment in Great Britain has risen by almost 1·7 million since March 1983, the longest period of sustained employment growth in almost 30 years. Unemployment throughout the United Kingdom has fallen by over 700,000 from its July 1986 peak and the unemployment rate is now below the European Community average. It has fallen in all regions of the country with the biggest falls over the last year in the west midlands, the north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside. Long-term unemployment in the United Kingdom fell by a record 234,000 in the year to January, whilst unemployment among under-25s is at its lowest level for over five years and is now much lower than the European Community average.

Changes in employment legislation and measures to assist labour mobility have improved the operation of the labour market. Many restrictions on the employment of women have been lifted.

The Government's policies have helped the small firms sector to grow rapidly and to make a substantial contribution to employment and wealth creation. About 1 million additional jobs were created in the United Kingdom by small firms and self-employment between 1982 and 1984, and since 1980 the number of small firms has grown by around 500 a week. Self-employment has risen by over 1 million since June 1979. The small firms service provides advice and support for small firms. The enterprise allowance scheme has helped over 300,000 people in Great Britain to set up in business on their own. The Government have helped create a network of local enterprise agencies to encourage the development of small firms.

The Government have introduced entirely new approaches to delivering practical help for unemployed people to get back to work. Since July 1986, some 3·5 million personal interviews have been carried out under restart, 90 per cent. of them resulting in an offer of positive help from the range of opportunities available, including job-clubs and the still expanding enterprise allowance scheme. The Government have taken steps to ensure that benefits are properly paid to those who are entitled to them and not to others. The work of jobcentres, previously administered by the Manpower Services Commission, and that of the unemployment benefit service have now been brought together in the employment service, with the priority of giving effective help to unemployed people, especially the long-term unemployed, and placing them in jobs and training.

The Government have revolutionised vocational education and training for young people through the technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI) and two-year youth training scheme (YTS). The TVEI became a national scheme last autumn. Over 1·5 million young people have had vocational training under YTS, and a wide range of courses leading towards a vocational qualification is available to all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers. From September this year, all young people not going into a job or staying in full-time education will be guaranteed YTS until their 18th birthday. Unemployment on social security benefit will no longer be an option for this group.

The Government have announced a major new programme, employment training, building on the experience and successes of the community programme and the new job training scheme. The Government will guarantee employment training or a place in the enterprise allowance scheme or in a job club to all those aged between 18 and 25 who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months, and also aim to provide employment training for those over 25 who have been unemployed for two years. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications is establishing a clear system of relevent vocational qualifications.

Legislation has been passed protecting members against abuses of trade union power, extending their rights to influence the affairs of their unions and restoring the balance in industrial relations between managements and unions. In particular, secondary blacking and picketing have been made unlawful and unions are required to hold ballots before strike action.

The Government have stepped up the attack on urban decay and have given priority to encouraging investment in inner city areas through a range of measures amounting to some £3 billion in 1988-89. A new action for cities drive was launched in March 1988 which included a new urban development corporation in Sheffield and the extension of the existing corporation in Merseyside; streamlined grants to encourage the development of inner city land and buildings; more help for small businesses in inner city areas; further Government support for links between schools and employers; new crime prevention initiatives; and better inner city roads. To help pull together the various Government programmes involved, city action teams have been established based in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne and Nottingham. At local level, 16 inner city task forces support projects which open up job and enterprise opportunities for local residents.

The Government have launched a major five-year campaign to ensure that business in every part of the country is fully prepared to take advantage of the single market that will exist in the European Community by 1992.

The Government have encouraged competition throughout the economy. Proposals have been published for the reform of the legislation on mergers and restrictive trade practices.

The Government have launched the enterprise initiative, with the objective of helping businesses acquire the skills and information they require to compete effectively.

The balance of regional policy has been changed so that the Government's enterprise policies are properly reflected in the regions.

The emphasis of the Government's financial support for industry has shifted to industrial innovation. Support is now concentrated on collaborative research

programmes, including the LINK scheme which brings together academic and industrial researchers, and the Eureka initiative for collaborative research in Europe.

The Financial Services Act has established a statutory framework for self-regulation of the financial services industry in the interests of investor protection, under the Securities and Investments Board and a number of self-regulatory organisations.

The Government have been active to strengthen safeguards against fraud and to ensure that the probity of our financial institutions is maintained without undermining their competitiveness. The Companies Acts 1980 and 1981 strengthened the powers of investigation and the courts' powers to disqualify directors for misconduct; and made insider dealing a criminal offence.

The Government have worked actively to maintain the world open trading system and are contributing to the current Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, which was launched in 1986 under the United Kingdom presidency.

Since 1979 productivity per person has increased by nearly 50 per cent. in agriculture and over 35 per cent. in the food manufacturing industry. Prices of food to consumers have risen more slowly than the general price level. The annual rate of increase in food prices since May 1979 has been 5·8 per cent. Exports of food, feed and alcoholic beverages have more than doubled since 1979.

Reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP), to tackle the problems of burgeoning expenditure and surplus production, has been significantly advanced by the agreement at the European Council in February on the application of budget discipline to the CAP, notably through the introduction or extension of stabilisers in all the main CAP commodity regimes. The stabilisers, which link full levels of support to predetermined quantities of production and provide for reductions in support if these quantities are exceeded, are intended to act as a disincentive to surplus production and thus to help bring supply and demand into better balance. These measures carry forward the process of reform of the CAP which has included the introduction of milk quotas in 1984, changes to the milk and beef regimes (including the maintenance of the beef variable premium) agreed under the United Kingdom presidency in December 1986, and measures to weaken intervention in the cereals and oilseeds sectors introduced in 1987.

The Government have also successfully negotiated the sheepmeat regime. The wool guarantee, the suckler cow premium and expenditure on hill livestock compensatory allowances have all been increased.

The Government have introduced measures designed to encourage farming practices which are beneficial to the landscape and to the conservation of wildlife, and have announced a number of new policy initiatives designed to encourage alternative uses of farmland, and to increase diversity on farms and in the rural economy generally. The Government recast capital grants in 1985 to put a strong emphasis on assistance for conservation work on farms and on investment to prevent pollution of rivers and streams from farm waste. Prompt action was taken to assist those farmers and growers affected by the storm of 16 October last year through specific emergency grant schemes. The sale, supply and use of pesticides has been brought under statutory control to ensure safe use in relation to operators, consumers and the environment.

After protracted and difficult negotiations, the Government secured an EC common fisheries policy settlement in 1983 on terms very favourable to the United Kingdom. Conservation, control and structural measures have all been strengthened. As part of that settlement and subsequently. The Salmon Act 1986 strengthened powers to deal with illegal fishing and made improvements in the conservation and management of salmon. In Scotland a new inshore fisheries regime has been established. The value of United Kingdom fish landings and of fish farming output has increased substantially.

Control to ensure protection of the marine environment have been strengthened, and substantial reductions have been achieved in the low levels of contaminants in material licensed for disposal at sea.

In transport, the Government have successfully increased consumer choice and efficiency by promoting competition in the provision of services.

British Airways and the British Airports Authority have been privatised. The Government have authorised the development of Stansted as London's third airport, encouraged the development of airport facilities in the regions, improved the management of the main local authority airports by having them transferred to companies, and have banned the noisiest aircraft from operating at British airports. The Government have strengthened competition on international routes within Europe and over the north Atlantic by negotiating more liberal bilateral arrangements and have secured agreement to a package of liberalisation measures within the European Community as a first step towards completion of the internal aviation market.

In England local bus services outside London have been deregulated. This has resulted in greater competition between operators, more innovation and flexibility in meeting the needs of passengers, and lower costs and subsidies, as well as an increase in the overall provision of bus mileage. The privatisation of the National Bus Company has been completed well ahead of schedule, and the majority of its subsidiaries have been bought by their own managers or employees. British Rail has been given objectives for improving the quality of its services and increasing its efficiency through reduced subsidy. It is now set to meet its 1989-90 objective while sustaining an ambitious and increasing investment programme to improve quality of service. This means that its subsidy will have been reduced by almost 45 per cent. between 1983 and 1989-90.

The Government have successfully promoted co-operation between public and private sectors in projects such as the Channel tunnel, the London docklands light railway and the Dartford-Thurrock crossing of the Thames.

The Merchant Shipping Act includes measures to improve safety and encourage the employment of British seafarers aboard British ships. Extensive action has been taken to improve ferry safety following the tragic Zeebrugge desaster.

In England capital investment in trunk roads has increased by over 30 per cent. since 1979. Some 750 miles of new and improved motorways and other trunk roads have been completed, including 300 miles of bypasses. The Government are supporting 340 major local authority road schemes, most of which are aimed at bypassing local communities or relieving them of traffic. The Government's continuing concentration on road and

vehicle safety measures has given us the best road accident record in Europe. Casualty figures for 1987 were the lowest for 30 years, despite a fourfold increase in traffic in the same period; and pedestrian deaths were the lowest ever recorded. The aim is to reduce casualties by one third by the year 2000.

Government policies on taxation and licensing helped to make 1987 the third best year ever for drilling activities in the North sea, despite the 1986 fall in oil prices. Domestic gas now costs less in real terms than in 1970, while the price of electricity for domestic consumers has gone down by 8 per cent. in real terms in the last five years.

Deep-mined productivity of coal production is now 60 per cent. higher than it was in 1978-79 and some 50 per cent. higher than the average for 1983-84, before the miners' strike. This encouraging growth in productivity reflects a continuing effort by all concerned to produce coal at a price the market can afford.

In England spending on the Health Service is up by 39 per cent. in real terms from £6·4 billion in 1978-79 to £18·9 billion now. There are over 10,000 more doctors and dentists and over 50,000 more nurses and midwives. Capital spending has increased from £373 million to £1·1 billion, a 32 per cent. increase in real terms. Some 270 health building schemes, each worth over £1 million have been started and completed. Over 1 million more in-patient cases are now being dealt with each year, and waiting lists are down by 64,000.

The Government made an extra £25 million available to health authorities in England last year, through the waiting list fund, to tackle waiting black spots. Indications are that they have used the extra funding to treat some 100,000 more cases. The Government have increased the fund to some £30 million in the current year and the aim will be at least to equal last year's ambitious achievements.

There is already clear evidence that the general managers who have been appointed throughout the Health Service are providing energetic and innovative leadership, with speedier and more incisive decision making. Health authorities are continuing to improve efficiency and their cost improvement programmes have yielded savings worth over £560 million in the past four years. Savings worth some £150 million are planned for this year.

The Government have set up an independent review body to recommend on nurses' pay, have implemented all five of its reports, and have funded 90 per cent. of the costs of those awards. The 1988 report will be implemented in full and fully funded, with the result that nurses will receive their highest ever level of pay in real terms, and will have received on average a 44 per cent. increase in real terms since 1979.

The Government have developed a comprehensive strategy in response to the threat of AIDS and have taken, and will continue to take, all necessary measures to contain the spread of the virus.

In the social services field there have been increases in places in training centres and community homes for mentally handicapped people. There are more home help staff, more social work staff, more places in day centres for elderly people, and many more places in residential and nursing homes.

Following publication of the White Paper "Promoting Better Health", the Government have opened up discussions with professions about arrangements for implementing a wide range of important reforms in the delivery of primary health care. The emphasis is on health promotion, better services for the consumer and value for money.

Government expenditure on social security is now at its highest level ever both in cash and real terms. Spending on social security is up by 39 per cent. in real terms from £16·4 billion in 1978-79 to £46·4 billion to 1987-88. For pensioners, the Government's main achievement has been to provide the opportunity for average incomes to grow by 18 per cent. in real terms over the period. Total expenditure, including rate rebates on benefits for the elderly and spending on 1 million extra pensioners, has risen by 31 per cent. in real terms.

The Government have undertaken a fundamental review of the social security system resulting in the Social Security Act 1986. Most of the provisions of that Act have now been implemented. Statutory maternity pay was introduced in 1987; income support has now replaced supplementary benefit, family credit has replaced family income supplement, housing benefit has been changed, and the social fund has been introduced. This will make the system simpler and easier to understand, direct help more effectively to those who need it, and improve work incentives. Over £200 million extra has been provided for family credit to help low-income working families with children.

An objective of the Government has been to encourage the spread of occupational and personal pensions, and to give people more choice in how to provide for their retirement. In 1985 the Government gave everyone leaving an employment scheme the right to a fair transfer value to a new employer's scheme or to buy a deferred annuity. The Government also gave members rights to all the information they need to take decisions about their pension. The Social Security Act 1986 gave everyone the choice between staying fully in SERPS or an employer's scheme or having a personal pension scheme, and employees will be able to boost their pension rights by making extra contributions.

Since 1979, substantial progress has been made in reforming the structure and financial basis of local authorities to make them more accountable and reponsive to the needs of their local electorates, and to give better value for money in the provision of local services. The structure of local government in England has been simplified and improved with the abolition of an unnecessary tier of government in Greater London and the Metropolitan areas. The Audit Commission for England and Wales was established in 1983 and has already made great progress in identifying opportunities for improving value for money in local government, some of which are beginning to show results. Legislation on competition is ensuring that local authorities in Great Britain subject the provision of an increasing range of their services to the discipline of competitive tendering. The Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local authority business identified a number of measures needed to improve local authority procedures and avoid abuses, and the Government are following up the recommendation in stages. Measures on local government finance have restrained the growth of local authority expenditure in Great Britain, particularly in some of the more extravagant high-spending authorities. The Local Government Finance Bill currently before Parliament makes provision for the abolition of domestic rates in England and Wales and their replacement by a fairer and

more broadly based community charge. The same Bill includes provisions to remedy the uneven burden of non-domestic rates on businesses through the establishment of a nationally determined uniform business rate.

In housing, the Government introduced the first statutory charter of rights for public sector tenants including the right to buy. Since then over 1 million tenants in Great Britain have bought their homes. The stock of owner-occupied dwellings in Britain has increased by 3 million; more people own their homes than ever before; and 64 per cent. of all dwellings are owner-occupied. There has been a net increase in the stock as a whole of about 1·6 million—more than enough to keep pace with the growth in the number of households over the period.

Grants for home improvements have been at a historically high level; improved targeting on those in most need is being introduced. The Government's estate action programme has helped local authorities with over 200 schemes on rundown council estates in England. A scheme of assistance has been introduced for owners of defective houses previously in the public sector throughout Great Britain, and good progress has been made. Measures have been introduced to strengthen the rights of leaseholders living in private blocks of flats.

The Housing Bill, which is currently before Parliament, aims to broaden the choice open to tenants and encourage more private investment in housing in England and Wales; it will deregulate rents in the independent rented sector; provide the basis for an expansion of the housing association movement; allow for the establishment of housing action trusts in some of the most rundown areas of local authority housing; and provide all secure local authority tenants with the opportunity to transfer to new landlords approved by the Housing Corporation.

In the environment, the Government have created a unified inspectorate of pollution for England and Wales with a remit to develop an integrated approach to pollution control. Following a successful initiative in Europe to bring to an end the addition of lead to petrol, the maximum lead content of petrol has been cut by 60 per cent, a tax differential in favour of unleaded petrol of 11p a gallon has been introduced and unleaded petrol is now available at over 800 sites.

The Government have taken steps to reduce the pollution of our rivers, estuaries and beaches. Last year the United Kingdom chaired the North sea conference which produced an important package of measures to safeguard and enhance the quality of the North sea.

The Government have made substantial progress in securing the future of the natural heritage. In Great Britain, over 5,000 sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) have been notified or renotfied as part of the implementation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; this process is now 85 per cent. complete. Also, 26 special protection areas have been designated throughout the United Kingdom under the European birds directive, and 35 wetlands of international importance under the ramsar convention.

The Government have taken a wide range of steps to simplify and improve the planning system and to speed up its operation, while protecting and enhancing the environment in town and country. The area of approved green belt in England has more than doubled since 1979; the annual acreage of agricultural land taken for development in England and Wales the 1980s is less than one third of the levels seen in the 1960s and early 1970s; and nearly one half of land for new housing development in England is either redeveloped land or vacant land within urban areas.

The Government have introduced sweeping reforms in the education system in England and Wales. The Education Reform Bill now before Parliament aims to improve the standards of achievement of all pupils through the introduction of a national curriculum for the 5 to 16 age group of core and foundation subjects for which attainment targets, programmes of study and arrangements for assessment and testing will be established; to widen the choice available to parents for the education of their children; to ensure that schools can admit pupils up to the limit of their capacity; to require all local education authorities to develop schemes of resource allocation to schools and to delegate budgetary control to all further education colleges, secondary schools and larger primary schools; to offer all secondary schools and larger primary schools the opportunity to apply to opt out of local authority control; to establish polytechnics and other major colleges as independent institutions; and to reform the arrangements for funding the university system.

In addition, the Government continue to seek to improve teaching quality, and have introduced a new 16-plus examination system, the GCSE based on national criteria, and the AS levels to broaden A-level studies. The technical and vocational education initiative has been introduced to boost practical elements in the 14 to 18 curriculum. In higher education, record numbers of students have been admitted and the Government have endorsed plans which provide for a continuation of the shift towards science, engineering and other vocational subjects.

The Government have substantially increased the manpower and other resources available to the police and have strengthened their powers to deal with public disorder. Over 50,000 neighbourhood watch schemes are now in operation in Great Britain. A total of £80 million is being invested in crime prevention this year and a new national crime prevention organisation will be established to co-ordinate local initiatives and spread good practice. An independent Crown Prosecution service is now in operation throughout England and Wales. Twenty-four senior and 34 junior attendance centres have been opened.

Measures have been taken to ensure that the terms of imprisonment served by violent offenders fully reflect society's abhorrence of their crimes. Government assistance to the victims' support movement has been greatly expanded: £11 million will be provided over the next three financial years to help local schemes. The Government have continued to develop an overall strategy for countering drug misuse and illicit trafficking. The Video Recordings Act has brought "video nasties" under control.

Legislation has also been put through for data protection; to provide more rigorous control of animal experimentation; to provide a framework for the development of broadcasting by satellite and cable television (including the establishment of the Welsh fourth channel); to set out a new framework for police powers, for providing safeguards for the citizen and for handling complaints against the police, to control the possession and sale of alcohol in connection with football matches; to provide for the establishment of the serious fraud office,

now in operation, and make other improvements in the investigation, prosecution and trial of fraud offences; and to provide comprehensive new powers to investigate, restrain and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking, where the Government are working for international agreements to make such powers more generally effective.

The Government have recently set up an inquiry to consider allegations that former war criminals may be living in this country. The Government have played a major role in developing international co-operation in the fight against terrorism and have strengthened police powers under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The policy of fair immigration control has seen the number of people accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom fall from 69,700 in 1979 to 45,500 in 1987, the lowest total since Commonwealth citizens became subject to control in 1962.

The Government introduced measures to improve controls on possession of firearms and shotguns; to remove outdated restrictions in liquor licensing law; to enable the United Kingdom to participate more effectively in the international fight against crime, including a major reform of extradition laws; to make provision for courts to order the confiscation of the proceeds of profitable crime; to provide for unduly lenient sentences to be reviewed; to create a statutory right for the victims of crime to receive compensation; to tighten the law on possession of knives and to ban the sale of offensive weapons which have no legitimate use; and to strengthen the jury system.

The Government have continued the reform of family law; have legislated to remove the legal disadvantages of children born outside marriage; and have brought schemes into effect to combat the evils of child abduction both within the United Kingdom and throughout the world. The Government have simplified conveyancing and extended the areas in which titles have to be registered.

A Legal Aid Bill has been introduced to set up a new board to administer legal aid and generally to ensure that legal aid is operated as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Government have continued the major programme of simplification and consolidation of our statute law.

In the arts, the National Heritage Memorial Fund has been established with funding of some £90 million to date. There has been a significant upsurge in business sponsorship — the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme has brought £16 million of new money into the arts in four years. Major progress has been made with the building of the new British Library at St. Pancras, and there have been major expansion schemes at some of the national museums and galleries, including with the Tate gallery's Clore gallery and the Tate gallery at Liverpool, the National gallery's Sainsbury wing, and the redevelopment of the Imperial war museum.

In defence, a substantial increase in resources has enabled the capability of the armed forces to be strengthened. The Government played its full part in implementing the NATO twin-track decision to modernise intermediate range nuclear weapons while seeking to achieve an arms control agreement, and this policy has been vindicated by the INF treaty. Increased efficiency is being pursued by the continuing transfer of resources from the support areas to the front line, and by introducing increased competition in defence contracts and promoting collaboration with our international partners. Major reorganisation of the headquarters structure of the Ministry of Defence has been introduced.

In foreign policy, the Government have maintained Britain's firm commitment to national defence and the NATO Alliance, and have promoted closer European defence co-operation — including through a revitalised Western European Union—as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance. At the same time, the Government have worked vigorously for a more stable relationship between East and West, seeking verifiable reductions in nuclear and conventional weapons and a global ban on chemical weapons, greater co-operation in settling regional conflicts and full respect for human rights. British Ministers and representatives have been active in building up an East-West dialogue with these aims and in promoting the setting priorities for the arms control process. The Government played a leading role in the conference on disarmament in Europe in which was successfully concluded in autumn 1986, and gave full support to our United States allies in their negotiations with the USSR over INF, which concluded last autumn with agreement on the global elimination of United States and Soviet land-based INF missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km.

Within the European Community, the Government reached agreement at Fontainebleau in 1984 that the United Kingdom should pay a fairer share of the EC budget. In the United Kingdom presidency in 1986, and at the Brussels European Council this February, the Government secured major reforms of the common agricultural policy, including a binding ceiling on agricultural spending and automatic cost-cutting regime, for all commodities.

The Government have helped make it the Community's top priority to complete the single European market and services by 1992 so as to give our industry improved access to important markets in Europe and a better base from which to compete in world markets. The Government have championed measures to help our citizens, such as less regulation, cheaper air fares and higher product safety standards.

The Government supported the entry of Greece, Spain and Portugal into the Community, thereby underpinning their democracy and strengthening NATO. At British initiative the EC member states have agreed an internationally binding basis for closer co-operation in foreign policy.

Rhodesia was brought to legal independence as the Republic of Zimbabwe in 1980. The Government resolutely upheld and continue to defend the right of the Falklands islanders to live in peace under a Government of their own choosing. An agreement with China about the future of Hong Kong was ratified in 1985 and good progress has since been made implementing that agreement. The Gilbraltar border has been reopened, and negotiations have been started with Spain aimed at overcoming all our differences over the Rock.

At the United Nations and elsewhere the Government have supported the international rule of law and respect for human rights. With our Commonwealth and European partners, the Government have worked towards ending apartheid in South Africa by peaceful means. The Government have worked successfully for financial and administrative reform in the United Nations and have promoted international co-operation to combat terrorism

and drug-trafficking. With the World Health Organisation, the Government organised the 1988 London summit of Ministers of Health on programmes for AIDS prevention, which was attended by 148 countries.

The Government have maintained a substantial and effective aid programme, totalling £11 billion in the period 1979-87. While the bulk of our bilateral aid has been focused on the poorest countries, the Government have provided long-term help to nearly 130 developing countries in all. The Government have responded swiftly and generously to appeals for emergency aid to sub-Saharan Africa and have taken the lead in promoting measures to relieve sub-Saharan African countries of their official debts.

Within the last year, unemployment in Scotland has fallen by 47,500. Manufacturing productivity in Scotland increased by 5·6 per cent. per annum between 1979 and the first half of 1987. Service sector employment showed an increase of over 62,000 between June 1983 and June 1987, and the number of self-employed increased by 45,000 between June 1981 and June 1987, compared with virtually no change in the three decades to 1981.

Since the introduction of the enterprise allowance scheme in 1983, nearly 30,000 unemployed people have been helped to start up in business, and over 132,000 people are currently benefiting from the Government's employment and training measures in Scotland. The Manpower Services Commission plans to spend some £330 million in Scotland in the current year.

In 1987, there was a net growth of 2,500 in company registrations in Scotland. Between 1979 and 1986, the output of the Scottish electronics industry rose by around 133 per cent. in real terms, and between 1979 and 1986 electrical and instrument engineering output in Scotland rose by nearly 90 per cent. Inward investment of some £2·6 billion, planned to create or safeguard some 50,000 jobs, has been attracted to Scotland since the formation of "Locate in Scotland" in 1981.

Owner-occupation among Scots has increased significantly, from 35 to over 43 per cent. A major contribution to this increase has been the 113,000 tenants who have exercised their right to buy their houses under the statutory charter of rights for public sector tenants introduced in 1980. The Housing (Scotland) Bill will set up a new housing development agency, Scottish Homes, which will play a key role in revitalising Scotland's housing and will promote more diverse patterns of tenure in the public sector. The volume of applications for home improvement and repairs grants has increased substantially. The Government have enabled the number of houses let by housing associations in Scotland to increase sixfold since 1979.

Legislation providing for the abolition of domestic rates in Scotland and their replacement by a community charge payable by all adults was enacted in 1987 and the new system will come into operation in 1989.

In town and country planning in Scotland, measures have been taken to speed up the planning system. On the planning requirements of high technology industries, small businesses, private housebuilders and major retail development, the Government have taken steps to allow the establishment of simplified planning zones. Major initiatives have been taken to reform and simplify the building control system to reduce restrictions while maintaining public safeguards. Access for disabled persons to public buildings has been greatly improved by reforms in building regulations.

The deregulation of local bus services in Scotland has been achieved with service levels maintained overall and improvements in many areas. The Government have stimulated innovation through competition while cutting subsidies. Since 1979, over £710 million has been invested in motorways and trunk roads in Scotland, including completion of the 127 miles of the A9 from Perth to Easter Ross, and substantial progress has been made on the Perth-Dundee-Aberdeen route, the A75 between Gretna and Stranraer, and the A82 alongside Loch Lomond. Twenty-seven bypasses, relieving communities of through traffic, have been opened.

Major reforms have been introduced in the education system. The Education (Scotland) Act 1981 gave parents a right to choose their children's school. Over 116,000 placing requests have been made to date and about 94 per cent. of them have been successful. That Act also increased educational opportunity by the introduction of the assisted places scheme from which more than 2,600 children benefited in 1987-88. The School Boards (Scotland) Bill, now before Parliament will further extend parental involvement through the creation of school boards. The school examination system is being modernised with the introduction of standard grade and associated revision of highers and certificate of sixth year studies. The technical and vocational educational initiative is being extended throughout Scotland. Proposals have been brought forward to revise the school curriculum for ages 5-14 and to improve assessment techniques, including the introduction of nationally standardised testing in key elements of English and mathematics at ages eight and 12. The number of students in full-time higher education in Scotland is at the highest level ever recorded and radical changes in further education have greatly increased the take-up of vocational training at all levels.

Police manpower in Scotland has increased, and, in order to release police officers for operational duties, the Government are encouraging civilianisation of posts wherever possible. Increased attention has been devoted to crime prevention.

The Government have intensified the campaign against drug misuse. Drug wings have been established in the Scottish crime squad and all eight Scottish police forces now have a specialised drug squad or unit. Since 1979, a total of 52 major hospital developments have been completed in Scotland, providing 5,803 beds and 481 day places. A further 34 schemes are in planning, under construction or being commissioned, which will provide a further 4,484 beds. In addition to the public education campaigns on AIDS, the Government have this year made over £6 million available to health boards throughout Scotland in recognition of the extra burdens which AIDS places upon them, including funding for three special AIDS units in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. The Government have supported several projects for research on HIV infection and AIDS and have provided funding for studies into the incidence of AIDS in Scotland. In addition, the Government encourage and support voluntary sector initiatives in the AIDS field in Scotland.

An extra £7·6 million was allocated to health boards in 1987-88 of which £3·6 million was devoted to schemes to reduce waiting lists. A special fund of £3 million has been

set aside for 1988-89 which will fund projects to reduce waiting times for patients. Health boards are also being asked to increase the priority they give to this area.

The Government's commitment to the outlying areas of Scotland is demonstrated by the Western Isles integrated development programme which ended its five-year span in 1987 and provided £56 million to improve socioeconomic conditions in the area and by the five-year agricultural development programme for Scottish islands which started this month. This provides £38 million to increase the efficiency of agricultural businesses without adding to overall agricultural production.

Five environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) have been designated in Scotland under which farmers can receive payments for agreeing to farm in a conservation-friendly way. These areas are in different parts of the country and include the Machair ESA in the crofting area of Scotland. The Government remain fully committed to the expansion of forestry and are now replacing the anomalous tax arrangements for forestry with a much improved grant scheme.

The Government's commitment to promote art and culture in Scotland has resulted in major new galleries for the Burrell collection in Glasgow and for modern art in Edinburgh. A new home for the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama was opened earlier this year and the first phase of a new building for the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh will be opened next year.

The Government have done more than any previous Administration to secure the future of the Gaelic language. A new specific grants scheme for Gaelic education, designed to improve the quality of Gaelic teaching and curriculum in schools was introduced in 1986. Grants under the scheme amount to £0·5 million in the current year. In addition, substantially increased resources have been allocated to a range of organisations providing support for Gaelic language and culture.

In Northern Ireland, the Government have pursued the policy of combating terrorism, within the rule of law, by the most effective means available. In the implementation of this policy, the security forces have conducted themselves with great courage and skill: many terrorists have been apprehended, much material has been recovered, and a large number of terrorist operations have been frustrated, which would otherwise have added to the tragic roll of death and suffering.

The Government have continued to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and have pressed for better cross-border security co-operation within the framework of it.

The Government's efforts to find an agreed basis on which greater responsibility can be devolved to the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland have continued.

A key objective of Government policy is to regenerate the private sector in Northern Ireland and release the region's potential for economic growth. To this end, the industrial development organisations in Northern Ireland have promoted 64,450 jobs, while the youth training programme has provided opportunities for an estimated 72,000 entrants with some 23,500 man years of work provided by the action for community employment scheme. At any time, some 29,000 persons are benefiting from a wide range of employment and training resources. A firm commitment has been made and significant steps taken to secure equality of opportunity in employment.

Belfast city centre has been revitalised both in terms of housing and commerce. Housing conditions have shown improvement with a considerable reduction in the level of unfitness, and a significant increase in the level of owner-occupation.

Proposals for the reform of the educational system to improve educational standards together with new opportunities and incentives for existing schools seeking to promote integrated education have recently been published.

In addition, substantial programmes have been maintained in agriculture, health and personal social services, environmental services and social security.

Since the establishment of WINvest in 1983, Wales has secured over 220 inward investment projects from overseas companies promising some 25,000 new or safeguarded jobs and involving about £800 million of capital investment. Since 1979, the Government have committed over £130 million — at today's prices — to the land reclamation programme in Wales, one of the largest and most sustained programmes in Europe, and the Welsh Development Agency has constructed some 7 million sq ft of factory space. The success of the Development Board for Rural Wales is indicated by an estimated 3·5 per cent. increase in the population of the area covered by the board between 1979 and 1986. Three enterprise zones set up by the Government are located in Wales; at Swansea, Delyn and the Milford Haven waterway. Over 8,500 people are currently employed in these zones, of whom 3,600 are in new jobs.

The Government have supported the rapid spread of local enterprise agencies in Wales, of which there are now 23. Such agencies have had £8·8 million of central Government assistance and they estimate that they have helped to create 18,900 jobs.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales has fallen in each of the last 22 months—a fall over that period of 3·1 percentage points.

Since their institution in 1982, urban development grants of some £34 million have been awarded to 67 projects throughout Wales. These are expected to bring forward a total private sector investment of some £159 million. As part of the Government's policy for inner city areas, the Cardiff Bay development corporation was established on 3 April 1987 to regenerate the docklands area. In 1988-89, a total of £16·2 million will be made available, the first tranche of a total commitment of nearly £50 million over the first three years. Since 1981, the number of self-employed in Wales has increased by 34,000 to 149,000.

Owner-occupation has increased from 59 per cent. of housing stock in 1979 to 68 per cent. Almost 60,000 public sector dwellings have been sold to their tenants under right to buy and voluntary terms since 1980 and over 50,000 new homes have been built for sale. Since 1979, the proportion of Welsh households lacking basic amenities has more than halved.

Over 142,000 home improvement grant schemes for private sector dwellings have been completed since July 1979 with a value of £414 million. In the same period, £339 million has been spent on the renovation of local authority housing stock. Since 1982, over 5,500 dwellings have been improved under enveloping schemes.

Expenditure on the Health Service in Wales has risen by over 42 per cent. after allowing for general inflation between 1978-79 and 1988-89. Over £500 million at current

prices will have been invested in the capital estate of hospital and community health services and five major new hospitals have been opened. Nearly 24 per cent. more patients were treated in 1986 than 1979. Medical and dental staff have increased by 13 per cent. and nursing and midwifery staff by 20 per cent. during this period.

Current expenditure on education, excluding school meals and milk, was 7·8 per cent. higher in real terms in 1986-87 than in 1978-79. Pupil numbers dropped by 14·8 per cent. in the same period: and expenditure per primary pupil rose by over 21 per cent. from £747 to £909, and per secondary pupil by nearly 28 per cent. from £1,033 to £1,320, their best ever levels.

Since 1979, over £700 million has been spent on the construction and improvement of roads in Wales providing 22 miles of motorway and 107 miles of trunk road. The Government have begun construction of the first ever immersed road tunnel in the United Kingdom —the Conway crossing/A55 scheme.

Since 1979-80, overall net resources made available to the Wales tourist board have increased by 170 per cent., including an increase of 140 per cent. in project support, which over the period has stimulated £78 million of mainly private sector investment and created almost 3,500 new jobs.

The Government's direct financial support for the Welsh language has increased annually from £0·2 million in 1979-80 to nearly £3·3 million in 1988-89. This is an increase in real terms of some 750 per cent. in that period. Since the Government decision to set up the Welsh fourth television channel in 1982, S4C has been an outstanding success in both artistic and employment terms.

New Zealand Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the question of the special arrangements for the import of New Zealand butter; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so at present.

Councillor Tim Brown

Mr. Clay: To ask the Prime Minister when she met Councillor Tim Brown of Sunderland to discuss shipbuilding.

The Prime Minister: As the House is aware, my normal practice is and will continue to be neither to confirm nor to deny whether meetings with private individuals have taken place, even in those cases where no such meeting has occurred.

Office Staff

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list individually the positions held by civil servants in her office, the periods they have been employed there and their current grades, together with salaries.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer]:* The information is as follows:

Position held	*Length of service*	*Grade*	*Salary £ per annum*
Principal Private Secretary	2 years 8 months	Grade 2	45,500
Private Secretary	3 years 10 months	G3	34,000
Secretary for Appointments	6 years 1 month	G5	29,465
Private Secretary	0 year 4 months	G5	28,215
Private Secretary	3 years 1 month	G5	25,815
Private Secretary	1 year 7 months	G5	21,092
Assistant Private Secretary	4 years 2 months	SEO	15,779
Assistant Private Secretary	15 years 1 month	Assistant 1 Prime Minister's Office	15,779
Chief Press Officer	8 years 2 months	G3	43,000
Press Officer	1 year 2 months	G5	28,215
Press Officer	1 year 9 months	SIO	15,823
Press Officer	0 year 7 months	SEO	15,779
Press Officer	0 year 1 month	SIO	14,629
Press Officer	1 year 0 months	SIO	14,629
Adviser (Policy Unit)	1 year 9 months	G5	25,815
Security Co-ordinator	2 years 2 months	Adviser (part time)	11,161
Support Staff	4 years 2 months	HEO	12,878
Support Staff	4 years 4 months	HEO	12,878
Support Staff	0 years 10 months	HEO	12,878
Records Reviewer	1 year 0 months	HEO (part time)	5,365·83
Support Staff	17 years 2 months	Assistant 2 Prime Minister's Office	12,672
Support Staff	8 years 1 month	HEO	12,878
Support Staff	10 years 2 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	0 years 6 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	1 year 4 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	0 year 10 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	1 year 8 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	0 year 4 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	2 years 6 months	EO	10,292
Support Staff	1 year 5 months	EO	10,292
Office Manager	15 years 4 months	EO	11,119
Support Staff	4 years 6 months	EO	9,278
Support Staff	0 years 5 months	AO	6,554
Support Staff	2 years 4 months	AO	7,247
Support Staff	0 years 10 months	AO	7,247

Position held	*Length of service*	*Grade*	*Salary £ per annum*
Support Staff	1 year 0 months	AO	7,247
Personal Secretary	4 years 2 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	20 years 2 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	11 years 2 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	16 years 5 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	20 years 3 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	10 years 1 month	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	11 years 10 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	20 years 1 month	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	5 years 5 months	SPS	9,200
Personal Secretary	1 year 8 months	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	0 year 1 month	SPS	9,200
Personal Secretary	6 years 1 month	SPS	10,150
Personal Secretary	8 years 5 months	PS	7,846
Personal Secretary	2 years 6 months	PS	7,846
Personal Secretary	4 years 1 month	PS	7,459
Personal Secretary	8 years 7 months	PS	7,846
Personal Secretary	2 years 4 months	PS	7,459
Personal Secretary	8 years 11 months	PS	7,846
Personal Secretary	0 years 10 months	PS	7,137
Personal Secretary	8 years 4 months	PS	7,846
Personal Secretary	0 year 1 month	PS	7,137
Personal Secretary	4 years 10 months	PS	7,846
Typist	4 years 3 months	Typist	6,363
Typist	8 years 1 month	Typist	121·90pw
Typist	0 year 3 months	Typist	5,657
Typist	1 year 6 months	Typist	5,657
Cook	7 years 1 month	Senior Cook (part-time)	69·19pw

Note: The table excludes the Office Keeper, the No. 10 Doorman, Messengers and Cleaners, all of whom are included in the Cabinet Office complement, and the custody guards, who are included in the PSA complement. Nor does it include those engaged on special adviser terms. Support staff covers those engaged in administrative and clerical duties. Salaries exclude London weighting and allowances, and are those payable as at March 1988.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Investors (Protection)

Sir William Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will take steps to publicise the purpose of the Financial Services Act 1986 to increase protection available to investors in the light of the campaign in the national press which suggests that insurance company salesmen are inherently less able to serve the needs of the public than independent financial advisers.

Mr. Maude: The rules made under the Financial Services Act have the effect that those selling or advising upon life insurance or unit trusts must be either appointed representatives of one provider of wholly independent intermediaries. Both will be subject to rules under the Act designed to protect investors. It is up to investment businesses to choose which of these two routes to follow, and investors are free to choose between them on their merits. The content of advertising, so long as it is not misleading and does not contravene any relevent regulations, is not a matter for me.

Manufactures

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the surplus or deficit in trade in manufactures with EEC and the rest of the world, respectively, in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months to March 1988, there was an estimated deficit on trade in manufactures of £10·5 billion with the European Community and an estimated surplus of £2 billion with the rest of the world.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will list the various schemes for assistance to industry available to business in the northern region and provide details of the total financial assistance provided to such firms in the last three years.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Assistance now available to businesses in the northern region is set out in the Department's booklet on the enterprise initiative.

Expenditure in the northern region in the three years to 31 March 1988 on the main schemes of assistance provided by my Department totalled some £350 million. This total consists of expenditure under the original and revised regional development grant schemes, project and training grants under the regional selective assistance, the business improvement services scheme, and expenditure under the Science and Technology Act and section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. Details are set out in the table.

£ million

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*[1]	*Total*
RDG I	58·1	79·5	29·0	166·6
RDG II	9·2	22·6	32·7	64·5
RSA	16·2	18·1	20·3	54·6
Science and Technology Act	4·0	3·5	1·7	9·2
Section 8, Industrial Development Act 1982	0·6	0·7	0·3	1·6
BIS[2]	0·4	1·2	1·6	3·2
EIEC[3]	16·9	11·4	20·0	48·3
Total	105·4	137·0	105·6	348·0

[1] Provisional.
[2] Direct aided schemes only.
[3] Includes both direct central Government funding and expenditure resulting from receipts on sales of and rents from factories.

SCOTLAND

Nuclear Power

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what have been the total investment costs for each of the South of Scotland Electricity Board nuclear power plants in *(a)* historic costs and *(b)* current costs to date.

Mr. Lang: The South of Scotland Electricity Board has provided the following information based on its accounts for the year ending 31 March 1987:

£ million

	Hunterston A	*Hunterston B*	*Torness*
Historic costs	88·6	299·0	1,704·7
Current costs	623·0	917·9	2,046·3

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what benefits he expects to accrue to the Scottish economy, and in particular Caithness, from the maintenance and expansion of the Nuclear Power Development Establishment at Dounreay.

Mr. Lang: Consideration of the future of the fast reactor research programme, a major part of which is based at Dounreay, is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I recognise that activities at the Dounreay establishment are of substantial economic benefit to the local community in Caithness.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has given permission for the export of any plutonium from *(a)* South of Scotland Electricity Board nuclear plants and *(b)* the Dounreay Fast Reactor Research Establishment under section 2(i) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, in any year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: No. All irradiated fuel from South of Scotland Electricity Board reactors is reprocessed by British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield and authority for disposals under section 2(i) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. Responsibility for activities at the UKAEA establishment at Dounreay is also a matter for my right hon. Friend.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total volume of radioactive wastes, including spent nuclear fuel, stored under licence at sites in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest inventory of radioactive wastes in the United Kingdom (January 1986) indicates that there are some 4,000 cu m of intermediate-level wastes and 151 cu m of high-level wastes stored at civil nuclear sites in Scotland. Low-level wastes are not normally stored but are disposed of as they arise. A revised inventory is in the course of preparation. Spent nuclear fuel is not regarded as waste. There are some 109·5 tonnes of fuel in store at civil nuclear sites in Scotland pending reprocessing.

THE ARTS

Natural History Museum

Mr. Soley: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the estimated change in attendance at the Natural History museum since the introduction of admission charges.

Mr. Luce: I understand, that in the year following the introduction of charges at the British Museum (Natural History) the number of visitors fell by slightly less than the 40 per cent. which had been predicted. Attendance figures are now showing a rising trend with 44 per cent. more people visiting the museum this Easter than during Easter 1987.

Museums

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the grants to each of the 10 national museums in cash terms for 1988-89, excluding the additional sums payable in consideration of superannuation and the Treasury Solicitor.

Mr. Luce: For the 10 national museums and galleries which received transfers of funding for superannuation, the Treasury Solicitor and other services, the grants-in-aid for 1988-89 excluding these transfers is as follows:

	£ million
British Museum	20·302
British Museum (Natural History)	18·834
Imperial War Museum	11·811
National Gallery	10·542
National Maritime Museum	7·388
National Portrait Gallery	4·964
Science Museum	15·445
Tate Gallery	9·744
Victoria and Albert Museum	19·024
Wallace Collection	1·412

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of his total expenditure on museums is represented by his allocation to the Museums and Galleries Commission in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: In 1988-89, the Museums and Galleries Commission's grant in aid represents 4·2 per cent. of the total planned central Government expenditure on museums and galleries.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish his estimated expenditure on *(a)* the Museums and Galleries Commission and *(b)* the Museums and Galleries Commission grants to each of the seven English area museum councils and the local museums purchase fund, for the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 inclusive.

Mr. Luce: The grants in aid paid to the Museums and Galleries Commission in 1987-88 and allocated to it for the years 1988-89 to 1990-91 are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	6·233
1988-89	6·481
1989-90	6·696
1990-91	6·877

Each of the figures includes £1·282 million for the local museum purchase funds. It is for the commission to decide

how much of its grant in aid to allocate to the English area museum councils. I understand that in 1987-88 its expenditure on the councils was £2·49 million.

Public Library Development Incentive

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister for the Arts what awards he intends to make under the public library development incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to announce that I am awarding £243,500 under the public library development incentive Scheme to Berkshire, Cleveland, Devonshire, Gateshead, Leicestershire and Sheffield library authorities, and to two regional library co-operatives: the London and south-eastern library region and the northern regional library system. These are the first awards made under the scheme which I set up last December to encourage new enterprises, designed to extend or improve the public library service in England. The award will cover 40 per cent. of the costs of the enterprises and are conditional on the authorities providing the remainder.

Arts Council (Publications)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the publications that the Arts Council produced in 1987-88 and the cost of each publication.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 29 April 1988]:* The Arts Council publishes two lists of its publications on a regular basis; I am placing copies of the latest ones in the Library. These give the cost of each publication for which a charge is made.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Hospital Radio Stations

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking an exemption for hospital radio stations from paying value added tax on essential equipment; what response he made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received no further representations since the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 10 March at column *307*.

Exchange Rate

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last reviewed the Government's policy on the level of the sterling exchange rate.

Mr. Lilley: The Government's policy on the sterling exchange rate was set out in my right hon. Friend's Budget speech and in the medium-term financial strategy published as part of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" on 15 March.

European Monetary System

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made as to whether the United Kingdom will be in a position to enter the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system when the internal market is completed.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 26 April to the hon. Member for Sedgefield, (Mr. Blair) at column *106*.

EC (Budget Council)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke *[pursuant to his reply, 3 May 1988, c. 399]:* The President of the Budget Council yesterday (5 May) declared the second reading draft budget formally established and has sent the necessary documentation to the European Parliament, thereby respecting the deadline under article 203(5) of the treaty for the Council to respond to the Parliament's modifications and amendments to the Council's own earlier proposals.

The Italian delegation has made a unilateral declaration to the effect that it cannot approve the draft inter-governmental agreement (IGA) needed to finance the budget before agreement has been reached on the method for calculating member states' contributions to the United Kingdom's abatement. This calculation affects the relative amounts of VAT and of IGA payments contributed by member states. The amounts entered in the draft IGA text are still explicitly provisional and indicative. The Council has agreed that they will be adjusted as necessary to conform with the payments due under the new own resources decision as finally agreed, and with the eventual size of the budget as adopted taking account of the Parliament's rights under the treaty as regards non-obligatory expenditure.

The provisional amounts in the draft IGA text are shown in the table. The total includes 1,000 mecu (£690 million) to cover the monetary reserve which, as agreed at the Brussels European Council, will be drawn upon only if changes in the ecu-dollar exchange rate increase spending requirements in the agricultural guarantee section of the budget by more than 400 mecu (£277 million). The intention is that member states should contribute to the IGA in accordance with the sums which they would have paid had the new own resources decision taken effect immediately. Their contributions will represent non-repayable advances against amounts due under the new own resources decision and will be payable by monthly instalments.

	mecu	*£ million*
Belgium	251	174
Denmark	171	119
Germany	1,982	1,375
Greece	84	58
Spain	528	366
France	1,532	1,063
Ireland	45	31
Italy	1,342	931
Luxembourg	15	10
Netherlands	369	256
Portugal	63	44
United Kingdom	1,263	876
TOTAL[1]	7,647	5,304

[1] The individual lines may not add up to totals because of rounding. All sterling equivalent figures are calculated at the rate of 1·4417 ecu to the pound used by the Commission in its latest budget proposals.

As explained in my reply of 9 March, columns *208-9*, the extra financing will be partially offset by smaller VAT

payments. On the foregoing figures, the total extra financing, compared with the maximum amount available under the existing own resources ceiling, would be around 5,400 mecu (£3,700 million), after allowing for a surplus of 500 mecu (£350 million) carried forward from 1987.

I have made it clear in the Council that the United Kingdom cannot pay over any of the additional sums without the approval of Parliament. Parliament's approval will be sought by means either of a special estimate or of a Bill, following the precedents of the 1984 and 1985 IGAs respectively. The method chosen will depend mainly on the timing of the adoption of the budget and the IGA and of the agreement of the new own resources decision. The IGA is subject to approval in the national Parliaments of all other member states as well.

ENERGY

CEGB Research and Development

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the proposed privatisation of the research and development functions other than nuclear now carried out by the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Parkinson: I have received a number of representations from within and outside the industry about the arrangements for research and development in the privatised electricity industry. We are consulting the industry on this matter.

Departmental Contracts

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list any contracts placed with Wastechem Ltd. of Bramhall, Cheshire, by his Department either alone or in collaboration with the Department of the Environment;

(2) if his Department has placed any contracts with BBGN Nuclear Technology of Bramhall, Cheshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has no contracts with either of the companies named.

"Britain's Nuclear Nightmare"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will seek to obtain for his departmental library a copy of the book by Rob Edwards and James Cutler entitled, "Britain's Nuclear Nightmare" published in April.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. The book has been ordered.

EC Research Centre

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell has any direct or indirect research involvement with the EEC joint research centre at Ispra, Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Plutonium (Leasing)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much money the Central Electricity Generating Board has received since May 1979 for the leasing of plutonium to *(a)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, at Dounreay, *(b)* the Kernforschungzentrum, at Karlsruhe, Federal Republic of Germany and *(c)* the Eidgenossisches Institut für Reaktorforschung at Wurlingen, Switzerland; and what safeguards arrangements cover these leases.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The sums of money received by the CEGB for leasing plutonium are commercially confidential. Plutonium under lease from the CEGB to the UKAEA is subject to Euratom safeguards and the terms of the UK/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement. At present the CEGB has no plutonium under lease to the Kernforschungzentrum, at Karlsruhe or the Eidgenossisches Institut für Reaktoforschung at Wurlingen.

Energy Technology Support Unit, Harwell

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current profitability and future commercial prospects of the energy technology support unit at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The energy technology support unit (ETSU) is a part of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, and its profitability is therefore a matter for the authority. The future commercial prospects for ETSU are likewise a matter for the authority.

Spent Nuclear Fuel Elements

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what tonnage of spent nuclear fuel elements has been stockpiled by the Central Electricity Generating Board from *(a)* Magnox reactors and *(b)* advanced gas-cooled reactor nuclear plants, awaiting reprocessing at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On 31 March 1988 CEGB power stations were storing a total of 1,200 tonnes uranium Magnox irradiated fuel and 55 tonnes uranium AGR irradiated fuel having discharged it from the reactors. All this fuel will be transported to Sellafield in due course.

Public Sector Companies (Foreign Shareholding)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list all the public sector United Kingdom companies in which Transnuklear of Hanau, Federal Republic of Germany, has a corporate share involvement; and if he will set out the percentage share involvement by Transnuklear;

(2) if he will list all the public sector United Kingdom companies in which NUKEM Gmbh of Hanau, Federal Republic of Germany, has a corporate shareholding and set out the percentage share involvement by NUKEM.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Neither Transnuklear nor NUKEM Gmbh has any shareholding in any United Kingdom public sector company in the energy sector. With regard to other areas of the public sector I shall reply to the hon. Member in due course.

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (Aldermaston)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any work connected with the fast reactor research

programme is currently, or ever has been, carried out at the atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No work on the fast reactor research programme has been carried out at Aldermaston since 1979.

Plutonium (Civil Reactors)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the reply given by the then Under-Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore), *Official Report*, 4 February 1983, column *206*, regarding the use of plutonium from civil reactors, remains Government policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 15 December 1986 at column *383*.

EMPLOYMENT

Channel Islands (Work Permits)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has been consulted in connection with legislation proposed by the authorities of *(a)* Jersey and *(b)* Guernsey seeking to establish work permit controls in those islands; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of such controls on British citizens in these territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

There is no legislation proposed by the Channel Islands' authorities to establish work permits which would affect United Kingdom citizens. Should any such system be proposed it would be examined in the light of the need to ensure that those with close links with the islands had adequate opportunities for employment.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Firemen

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications of the recent changes in the social security system for the position of firemen.

Mr. Scott: Under income support, retained (part-time) firefighters will have the first £15 of their weekly earnings disregarded instead of the full disregard that was available under supplementary benefit. Payments of bounty will be treated as capital.

Those who made the change from supplementary benefit to income support will have had the level of their benefit income protected by transitional additions.

Geriatric Beds

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications of the proportion of the number of available geriatric beds in any given district health authority to the number of geriatric consultants for the provision of good health service provision for the elderly.

Mrs. Currie: The number of geriatric beds available to a geriatric consultant is only one of many aspects of good health service provision for elderly people. Other factors would include the use made by elderly patients of beds under other consultants, levels of junior medical and support therapy staff, and, most importantly, the level of care in the community including services via the family practitioner committees. It is for health authorities to resource particular areas of their service according to local needs and circumstances.

Health Authorities (Throughput Rates)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the diverse throughput rates between health authorities, as revealed in his Department's performance indicators, in relation to the quality of patient care.

Mrs. Currie: Health Service indicators provide evidence which suggests that there are significant variations in the throughput, of patients receiving acute care, achieved by health authorities. Where this is reinforced by similar variations in values for related indicators it implies that there is scope for some authorities to make better use of resources and so provide more services to patients. Questions raised by the indicators need to be examined by managers in the light of other information available locally. This would include achieving the right balance between efficiency and quality of care.

All health authorities have been requested to discuss their indicators for the four years available, the most recent being for 1986-87, by the end of July.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the weekly premium over benefit of those participating on the new adult training programme will affect their claim to housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: No. An amendment to the housing benefit regulations will be laid before Parliament shortly, which would provide for the premium to be disregarded in the calculation of housing benefit entitlement.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if people with capital between £6,000 and £8,000 who fail to qualify for housing benefit because of the assumed tariff income, but who nevertheless have lost more than £2·50 per week, qualify for a transitional payment under his Department's new arrangements.

Mr. Scott: Yes.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates the administrative costs will be of his announcement of 27 April of changes to the housing benefit regulations *(a)* in total, *(b)* expressed as a proportion of the additional money to be made available to claimants and *(c)* as an average weekly sum per head of the beneficiaries of the changes.

Mr. Scott: The administrative costs of implementing the changes cannot be precisely assessed until more information is available about the scale of the inquiries and claims which need to be handled, and until detailed procedures for handling claims have been agreed.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals his Department has to set up a new unit to administer the transitional protection scheme on housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 5 May 1988 at columns *550-51*.

Infant Formulae

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet received the first report of the committee which monitors compliance with the provisions of the Food Manufacturers Federation voluntary code of practice on the marketing of infant formulae in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We received the first report from the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) monitoring committee early in March. It is a thorough, balanced and objective document and I congratulate the committee chairman, Dame Alison Munro, and her members.

Their report shows that the Government's arrangements for securing, within the United Kingdom, the aim and principles of the World Health Organisation's international code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes are working well. It makes suggestions about improving these arrangements further. We shall be discussing with the monitoring committee and the manufacturers how to take these matters forward.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Sevices what is his estimate of the average cost to public funds of each cervical cancer death, including hospital, medical services, medicines and funeral expenses, social security payments, and similar benefits to the children and relations in need.

Mrs. Currie: Information is available only on the costs incurred in any particular year of treating in-patients with cervical cancer who were discharged or who died in hospital during that year. This came to about £11 million in England, in 1987-88, which represents £940 per case treated. It is not possible to trace the treatment and other costs incurred in the course of their illness by patients who eventually die of cervical cancer. The average cost of each cervical smear taken is estimated to be £10.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to monitor *(a)* the assessments being carried out by health authorities for the nurses' and midwives' clinical grading review and *(b)* the funding implications of those assessments.

Mr. Newton: Implementation of the new clinical grading structure, including monitoring of assessments for consistency and of cost implications, will be among the matters to be covered in guidance we expect to issue shortly. This will be supplemented by visits from officials and by returns from health authorities showing how many staff have been allocated from each existing grade to each new one.

Income Support (Rates)

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are being taken, following the recent changes in social security regulations, to ensure that those previously entitled to 100 per cent. rate assistance, and who live in highly rated areas, will receive sufficient income support to offset having to pay at least 20 per cent. of their rates from 1 April.

Mr. Scott: As we made clear in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) the Government are firmly of the view that local accountability must be improved by giving everyone a financial interest in the level of domestic rates charged by their local authority. The income support rates include compensation to reflect the average amount the recipients will have to contribute: to provide further compensation on an individual basis would undermine the purpose of requiring everyone to meet at least 20 per cent. of their rates.

Medical Secretaries

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each region and for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the numbers of agency medical secretaries employed and *(b)* the amount of money spent on agency medical secretaries.

Mr. Newton: This information is not held centrally.

Social Fund

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many social fund applications for *(a)* grants, *(b)* loans and *(c)* either grants or loans had been received at his Department's local offices in London road and Becket street, Derby, up to the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 27 April 1988]:* We shall be placing in the Library details of the operation of the social fund for each local office. These data will comprise the outstanding balances in the loans budget and community care grants budget and the numbers and the financial amounts of applications and payments for crisis loans, budgeting loans and community care grants. This information will be provided monthly as soon as the data have been collated. I will write to the hon. Member when the first month's information becomes available.

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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